NINTENDO POWER

NINTENDO POWER
250th ISSUE!

Mega Man 10 • No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle • Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey • Glory of Heracles
2009 Nintendo Power Award Nominations

250
JANUARY 2010
SUBSCRIBER EDITION

www.fileradar.net

DEMOS

MODS

Current Traits
Childish
Good
Hopeless Romantic
Excitable
Easily Impressed
Evil
Excitable
Family-Oriented
Flirty
Friendly
Frugal
Excitable

Excitable Sims get excited about...pretty much everything. They enjoy an extra dose of self-satisfaction when good things happen for them in life.

PATCHES

EXPAND.GAMIN

fileradar.

This is the premier, next-gen game links site, built for the community by the community. FileRadar not only puts the power of game file distribution in your hands, but lets you feedback to save everyone a load of time and grief. It takes the power of a site like Digg and applies it to the most essential part of games you're either actually playing or want to play:

The Download.

There are millions of places Net-wide to download from, and only FileRadar umbrellas them all while empowering you to tell each other not only which are the best files to get, but what are the fastest and easiest places to get them from. With a thriving community of informed gamers all networked together to either be the first to playtest a hot new game or enhance the games they already love, how can you go wrong?

You can't, and neither can FileRadar.net.

G.KNOWLEDGE.

CONTENTS

JANUARY 2010

FEATURES

Tenth Time's the Charm 18
Mega Man 10. That's right—Mega Man 10. Join the Blue Bomber and Proto Man as they hit WiiWare for an all-new dose of NES-style awesomeness.

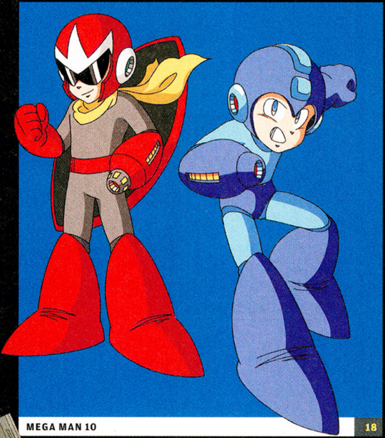
250 Reasons to Love Nintendo 38
We celebrate the 250th issue of Nintendo Power with a list of, well, everything! From heroes and villains to food and mustaches, it's all here.

Desperate Times 62
Travis Touchdown is back, and he's not happy. But you will be once you get the details on the kick-ass Wii action game No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle.

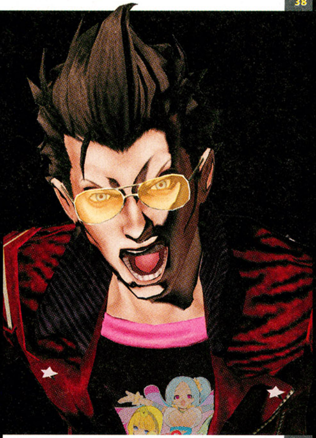
Polar Pandemonium 68
Head to Antarctica, put on your DEMONICA suit, and start enlisting the aid of creepy monsters in Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey for Nintendo DS.

Nominations for the 2009 Nintendo Power Awards! 72
It's that time of year again. Check out the nominees for the best gaming experiences of 2009—then go online and vote!

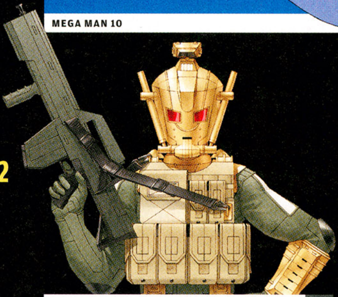
250 REASONS TO LOVE NINTENDO 38



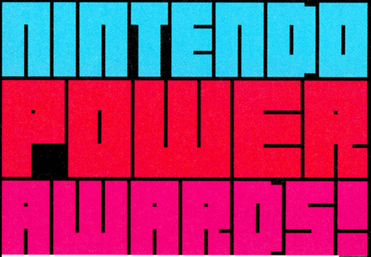
MEGA MAN 10 18



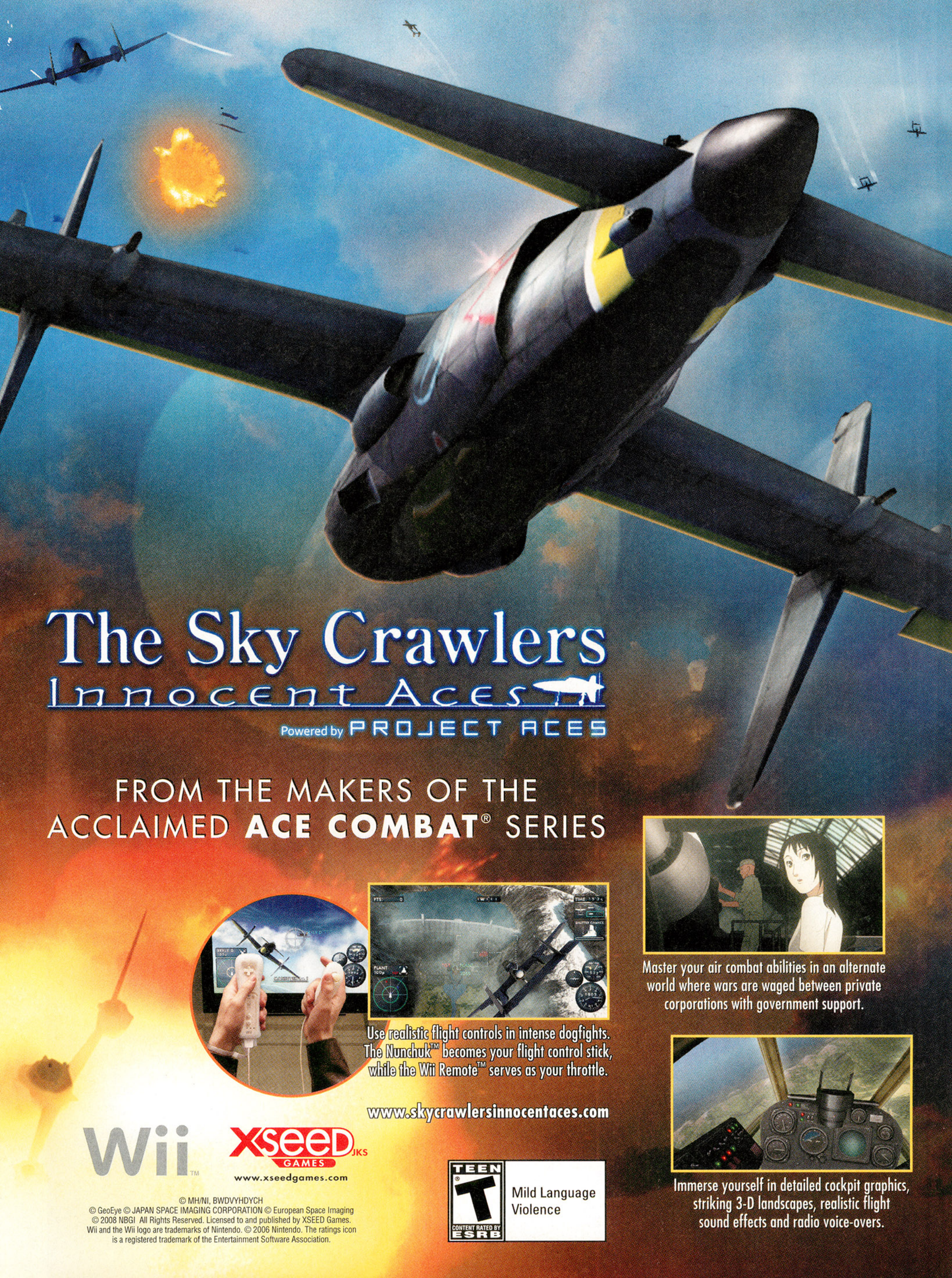
NO MORE HEROES 2: DESPERATE STRUGGLE 62



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: STRANGE JOURNEY 68



NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2009 NINTENDO POWER AWARDS! 72



The Sky Crawlers
Innocent Aces
Powered by PROJECT ACES

FROM THE MAKERS OF THE
ACCLAIMED **ACE COMBAT**® SERIES

Use realistic flight controls in intense dogfights. The Nunchuk™ becomes your flight control stick, while the Wii Remote™ serves as your throttle.

Master your air combat abilities in an alternate world where wars are waged between private corporations with government support.

Immerse yourself in detailed cockpit graphics, striking 3-D landscapes, realistic flight sound effects and radio voice-overs.

www.skycrawlersinnocentaces.com

Wii™

XSEED GAMES JKS
www.xseedgames.com

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Language
Violence

© MH/NI, BWDVYHDYCH
© GeoEye © JAPAN SPACE IMAGING CORPORATION © European Space Imaging
© 2008 NBGI All Rights Reserved. Licensed to and published by XSEED Games.
Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. The ratings icon
is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

CONTENTS

JANUARY 2010

DEPARTMENTS

Pulse 6

News 12

Download 18

Previews 30
- Calling 35
- City Builder 37
- Crime Scene 37
- Deca Sports DS 33
- Dementium II 34
- Fast Food Panic 32
- Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon 36
- Glory of Heracles 30
- Monster Hunter Tri 32
- Ragnarok DS 33
- Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing 31

Power Profiles 74

Playback 78

Reviews 81
- Assassin's Creed II: Discovery 89
- Avatar: The Game (DS) 87
- Avatar: The Game (Wii) 88
- Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers 86
- Jambo! Safari 89
- The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks 82
- Pro Evolution Soccer 2010 89
- Sands of Destruction 89
- The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces 87

Community 92

Next Month 96

NEWS NINTENDO DSi XL 12

PREVIEW SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING 31

POWER PROFILES TAKAHASHI MEIJIN 74

REVIEW THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS 82

GAME INDEX

Aha! I Got It!" Escape Game (WW) 26
Again (DS) 13
Arcade Bowling (DW) 28
Art Style: Digidrive (DW) 28
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery (DS) 89
Avatar: The Game (DS) 87
Avatar: The Game (Wii) 88
Battle of Giants: Dragons—Bronze Edition (DW) 28
Bejeweled Twist (DS) 13
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadows (DS) 16
Bomberman Blitz (DW) 29
Calling (Wii) 35
Carnival King (WW) 26
City Builder (Wii) 37
Crime Scene (DS) 37
Cybernoid (VC) 27
Deca Sports DS (DS) 33
Dementium II (DS) 34
Dragon Master Spell Caster (WW) 26
Easy Piano (DS) 16
Electroplankton Beatnes (DW) 29
Electroplankton Hanenbow (DW) 29
Electroplankton Nanocarp (DW) 29
Electroplankton Rec-Rec (DW) 29
Electroplankton Trapy (DW) 29
Family Card Games (WW) 26
Fast Food Panic (Wii, DS) 32
Fighting Street (VC) 28
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii) 86
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon (Wii) 36
Frogger Returns (WW) 26
Ghost Mansion Party (WW) 26
Glory of Heracles (DS) 30
Golden Axe (VC) 27
Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures (VC) 28
Jambo! Safari (Wii) 89
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS) 82
Mega Man 10 (WW) 18
Monster Hunter Tri (Wii) 32
Monster Rancher DS (DS) 13
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle (Wii) 62
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney (series) (WW) 22
PictureBook Games: The Royal Bluff (DW) 29
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010 (Wii) 89
Puzzle Quest II (DS) 14
R-Type (VC) 28
Ragnarok DS (DS) 33
Robot Rescue (DW) 29
Sands of Destruction (DS) 89
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey (DS) 68
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces (Wii) 87
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing (Wii, DS) 31
Street Fighter II: Champion Edition (VC) 28
Sudoku (DW) 29
Super Mario Bros. 2 (NES) 78
Tales of Monkey Island Chapter 3: Lair of the Leviathan (WW) 26
Tomena Sanner (WW) 24
Viking Invasion (DW) 29
Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap (VC) 28
Zombies Ate My Neighbors (VC) 28

DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

NEWS 🟥
DOWNLOAD 🟦
PREVIEW ⬛
FEATURE ⬜
PLAYBACK 🟧
REVIEW 🟦

CAPCOM®
TWO SIDES.
ONE BATTLE.
ALL KINDS OF AWESOME.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Suggestive Themes
Mild Language
Violence
EXCLUSIVE ON
Wii

CAPCOM'S 'VS.' SERIES HITS THE Wii™

Experience the craziness of online 'VS.' tag-team battles between all your favorite characters.

tatsunoko.vscapcom.com capcom-unity.com

©Tatsunoko Production ©SOTSU • Tatsunoko Production ©2005 Tatsunoko Pro./KARAS Committee.ALL RIGHTS RESERVED ©CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2010, ©CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. 2010 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. "TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM" is developed and published by Capcom Co., Ltd. partially licensed by Tatsunoko Production Co., Ltd.
Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. (c) 2006 Nintendo.

TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM™
ULTIMATE ALL-STARS

Pulse

Love Is in the Air

Chris Slate

Here at Nintendo Power headquarters, we asked ourselves what we love most about the games and systems that the magazine has now covered for 250 issues, and our answer was "everything." So, rather than leave anything out, we stuffed hundreds of our favorite bits of Nintendo nostalgia into a landmark 24-page anniversary feature. And just for kicks, we created an extraspecial cover for subscribers that recalls the cheesy retro goodness of games from the '80s and '90s (check out both versions of the cover below). We hope you enjoy the issue as much as we loved making it. Here's to another 250 issues!

Subscriber Edition

Newsstand Edition

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

V249 HOLIDAY 2009

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while reading old copies of Nintendo Fun Club News. But first, this month's special letter request: what are *your* reasons for loving Nintendo? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

GOING CUCKOO

It is my tradition with Zelda games to attack whatever animal there is (usually chickens) until it tries to kill me. When I finally got around to doing this in Twilight Princess, I found that after I hit the chicken for a while, the camera angle changed. When I moved the Control Stick, I found out that I was the chicken! I tried this a few more times and figured out that the effect lasts for about 10 seconds. It was strange to become a chicken; I guess it might be what you call instant karma. **—EEVEE FANGIRL**

This trick has been around for a while, but if you haven't tried it yet, be sure to give it a go!

MYSTERY MUSTACHE

With all of your gaming knowledge, do you guys happen to know why Mario's 'stache is black when the hair on his head is brown? My only guess is that he wears a wig. **—MATTHEW T.**

Matthew, you've stumbled upon video gaming's greatest mystery. Is Mario's lighter head of hair somehow the result of wearing his cap all the time? Did he eat a bad mushroom? Maybe Luigi colored Mario's mustache with a black marker while he slept? I fear the world may never get a definitive answer.

TERM TROUBLE

In the last couple of issues, I've noticed that a few of the NP editors have substituted the phrase "serious gamer" in place of the word "hardcore," and I welcome that change wholeheartedly! Too often games with guns, guts, and gore are automatically considered awesome because that kind of action is "hardcore." Meanwhile, a game like Little King's Story with charm, class, and sophistication is labeled "casual" without a second glance, even though it's a title that every "serious gamer" should take a look at! I hope that you guys continue this change, because it's definitely one that will help me and many other "serious gamers" to decide on future purchases!

—FREDDY FRO

I'd rather not say that any game is better suited for one type of player over another, but over the years a kind of code has developed within the gaming community, and whether we like it or not, we sometimes have to go along with it to communicate effectively. As Nintendo has proven with the Wii and Nintendo DS systems however, those old stigmas are changing, and we're happy to help move them along.

IS THIS A PROBLEM?

I recently become a Metroid maniac, and now I want to get every single Metroid game. It's getting worse every day, what do I do? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

It's simple: play more Metroid.

As an animation lover, I'm really pleased that you guys did an article on Epic Mickey. Seeing the concept art got me hyped, and reading about the game got me *super* hyped. I can't wait to play it! Plus, I never thought I'd see the day when Oswald the Lucky Rabbit would be written up in Nintendo Power. Good job, guys! —**CHARLIE JACOB**

News

Building a Better Mouse

We're not in the Magic Kingdom anymore. Disney's beloved icon embarks on a bold and unexpected journey in the Wii-exclusive Epic Mickey.

ON THE GAME'S CORE IDEA

SIBLING RIVALRY

When I first got New Super Mario Bros. Wii, I saw that Luigi was the character chosen for the Super Guide. Does this mean that Mario needs his brother's help bcause Luigi is better than he is? Because if it does, *Luigi rules!* **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

PUNCHY PICTURE

I recently picked up the latest issue of Nintendo Power and was surprised to see my Koopaling tribute illustration in the Pulse section. Thank you so much for putting it in the magazine. By the way, the Koopalings look great in New Super Mario Bros. Wii! **—JAMES S.**

No problem, James—and thanks for sending along your new Punch-Out!! piece!

MEGA EXCITED

We need another fantastic WiiWare game like Mega Man 9. Being an '80s kid that grew up during the peak of the NES era, I cannot possibly explain just how excited and ecstatic I was to play what was essentially a new NES game! It was seriously like Christmas morning the day that Mega Man 9 came out. I loved being able to experience that feeling again! How cool would it be to see another sequel like a Mega Man 10 or even a Mega Man X9 created with Super NES-style graphics? I guarantee that a game like that would sell like hotcakes! **—TIGMO55**

Tig old pal, your letter couldn't have come at a more perfect time. Make sure you're sitting down, turn to page 18, and get ready to freak out.

BUBBLE BOY

Your chart of the things most often said while playing New Super Mario Bros. Wii was great, but you left out "Get in a bubble!" **—KYLE M.**

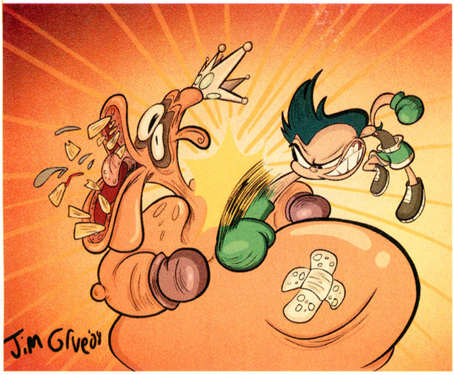
TOWERS, SHADOWS, AND ISLANDS

When I saw your feature in Volume 246 for Tower of Shadow, I was extremely impressed and excited. The game looks like it's going to be amazing, and it seems to be the first of its kind. Would you agree that it features a never-before-seen concept?

Also, will there be more games for Wii staring Wuhu Island from Wii Sports Resort? It has an amazing geography and lots of cool landmarks. I'd love to be able to land the plane in Wii Sports Resort, walk around the island, and explore those caves and ruins close up. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Tower of Shadow definitely looks impressive, and I agree that it appears to be one of the most orignal games yet for Wii.

As for your question about Wuhu Island, you can also find the tropical hot spot in both Wii Fit titles (although it hadn't yet been named in the series's first instalment). We don't know of any other planned appearances, but Mr. Miyamoto has said that he would like to revisit the island in future games.

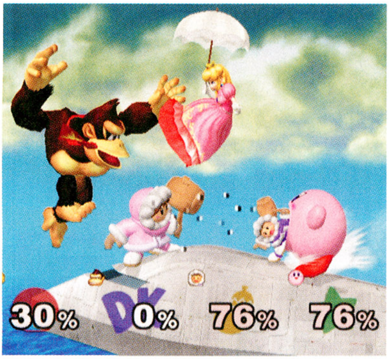


James keeps sending amazing pictures and we keep putting 'em in.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hey, Mr. Hoffman—yeah, I'm talkin' to you! (I need to blow some steam off at someone who can take it.) You've been a thorn in the side of everyone who disagrees with you for far too long, and it's time for a little payback. How about a little review of one of your reviews? Your review of G. I. Joe was just as bad and repetitive as the game itself. It lacked any real thought and repetitively stated how repetitive the game was in an extremely repetitive way. But in case you're wondering, I do, at least, I agree with your rating of the game—I also give it a 5.0 out of 10. **—THE GIANT FLOATING MONKEY HEAD**

The Hoff says: Oh yeah? Well, I give your letter and your bulbous disembodied noggin each a 4.5! Ha!



I was having a four-player fight in Super Smash Bros. Melee with my buddies; I was Kirby. I inhaled my friend, jumped off the edge, spit him to his doom, and then flapped my little arms back to safety. My friends and I all laughed until our stomachs hurt.

—JOVIALJEFFER

WHAT'S THE CRAZIEST THING YOU'VE SEEN IN A MULTIPLAYER GAME?

In Super Smash Bros. Brawl, I threw a Gooey Bomb and got it stuck to myself, and then my brother beat me to the Smash Ball. But then the Gooey Bomb went off, and the explosion knocked my brother off the stage, taking his last life, and I won! **—LUCARIO, THE AURA MASTER**

My friend and I were playing Bubble Bobble back in the good ol' NES days, and we were on the final level. We were so close to beating the game, and then—*poof*—we had a power outage. We were screaming "Oh my goodness" and "nooooo!" That was the last time I ever played Bubble Bobble. **—DR. G**

By far my best and craziest multiplayer experience was playing Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix with my cousins and friends. We only had one dance mat and had to take turns playing, which often resulted in wrestling matches over whose turn it was. It didn't matter how good you were; you were playing for the love of seeing Mario breakdance (something I will remember until the day I die). It's hard to fully explain what it was like; it was that crazy. Every now and then, we still pull out my GameCube and play DDR: Mario Mix at family functions. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

My friend and I were racing in Mario Kart: Double Dash!!, and he was so far ahead that he stopped at the finish line to tease me. Well, I used a star, and on the last turn, the geysers went off. Still invincible, I drove through one and was shot forward, right over his kart, and I beat him by less than a second! **—MR. GREEN**

The craziest thing I've seen in a multiplayer game? In Super Smash Bros. Brawl, someone used the Landmaster Final Smash for the first time ever, and it dropped right down the rotating block hole on Yoshi's Island. "Game!" **—ALT**

The most bizarre thing I've ever seen in a multiplayer game happened on the second level of Battletoads for NES, when you descend into the pit. My cousin was player 2 and accidentally hit and killed me and a bird at the same time. Through some weird glitch, my extra life returned not alone, but flying atop another bird. I had no control over the character and was forced to sit back and watch as he flew around the screen on the bird, attacking the other player. My cousin had to kill him over and over only to have him return flying on the next bird that appeared. Nothing like that ever happened again. **—JOHN**

The funniest things that I've ever seen in a multiplayer game have to do with the Bowser spaces in the original Mario Party on the Nintendo 64. Some of the minigames and things he says are hysterical! I still get a laugh out of beating the daylights out of the unlucky chump in the Bowser suit. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

PLEASE WRITE US

pulse@nintendopower.com

OR VIA CARRIER PIGEON AT

Nintendo Power/Pulse
c/o Future US
4000 Shoreline Court, Ste. 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080

TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR LETTER PUBLISHED:

Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER
ROBOT MASTERS

EDITOR IN CHIEF **Chris Slate**
EXECUTIVE EDITOR **Steve Thomason**
SENIOR EDITOR **Chris Hoffman**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR **Justin Cheng**
ART DIRECTOR **Chris Imlay**
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS **Patrick Cunningham, Casey Loe, Andrew Hayward, Tom Holien, Nathan Meunier, Randy Nelson, Chris Shepperd, George Sinfield, David F. Smith, Phil Theobald**
CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER **Rebekah Lane**
COPY EDITOR **Candace Cunningham**
LICENSING MANAGER **Frances Wall Jha**
EDITOR AT LARGE **Scott Pelland**

BUSINESS
GROUP PUBLISHER **Kelley Corten - 650.745.9225**
SENIOR DIRECTOR NATIONAL ADVERTISING **Rachelle Considine – rconsidine@futureus.com - 650.238.2505**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTEGRATED SALES **Nate Hunt – nhunt@futureus.com - 415.269.5408**
REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR **Isaac Ugay – iugay@futureus.com - 949.305.0767**
REGIONAL SALES MANAGER **Rachel Campos – rcampos@futureus.com - 650.745.9207**
ACCOUNT MANAGER **Arthur St. Germain - astgermain@futureus.com - 650.238.2571**
DETROIT CONSUMER MANAGER **Alan Dickinson – alandmedia@comcast.net - 248.792.2408**
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR **Heidi Hapin – hhapin@futureus.com**
SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER **Andrea Recio-Ang – arecio-ang@futureus.com**
MARKETING COORDINATOR **Allyson Kardel – akardel@futureus.com**

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Richie Lesovoy**
SENIOR PRODUCTION COORDINATOR **Larry Briseno**
PRINT ORDER COORDINATOR **Jennifer Lim**

CONSUMER MARKETING
DIRECTOR CONSUMER MARKETING **Rich McCarthy**
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR **Crystal Hudson**
NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR **Bill Shewey**
CONSUMER MARKETING OPERATIONS DIRECTOR **Lisa Radler**
RENEWAL & BILLING MANAGER **Mike Hill**
BUSINESS MANAGER **Elliot Kiger**
SR. ONLINE CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER **Jennifer Trinkner**
CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER **Mike Frassica**

FUTURE US, Inc.
4000 Shoreline Court,
Suite 400, South San
Francisco, CA 94080
www.futureus.com

PRESIDENT **John Marcom**
VP/CFO **John Sutton**
VP INTERNET DEVELOPMENT **Tyson Daugherty**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR GAMES **Stephen Pierce**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR MUSIC **Brad Tolinski**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR TECHNOLOGY & LIVING **Jon Phillips**
GENERAL COUNSEL **Charlotte Falla**
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR **Nancy DuBois**

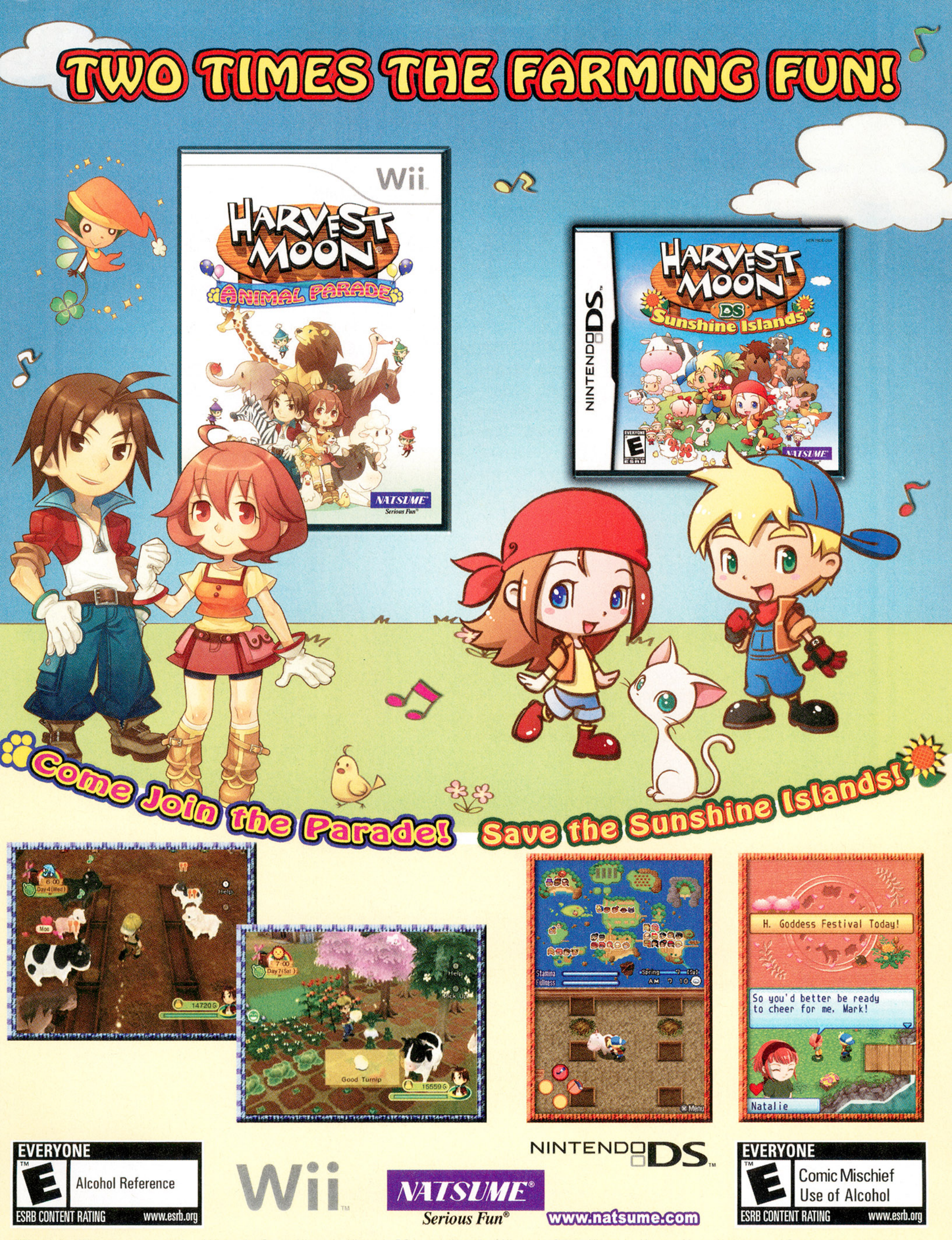
FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www.futureplc.com
Tel +44 1225 442244
www.futureplc.com

NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roger Parry
CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Stevie Spring
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR: John Bowman

Nintendo Power Customer Care
P.O. Box 5770
Harlan, IA 51593-1270
1-866-941-8368
For Subscription Problems Only!
nintendopower@cdsfulfillment.com.
http://service.futureus-inc.com/
REPRINTS: For reprints, contact Reprint Management Services, 717.399.1900 ext. 100

Game trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners. TM, ®, the Nintendo DS logo and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2010 Nintendo.

ISSN: 1041-9551


TWO TIMES THE FARMING FUN!
Wii
HARVEST MOON
ANIMAL PARADE
NATSUME
Serious Fun
NINTENDO DS
HARVEST MOON
DS
Sunshine Islands
EVERYONE
E
ESRB
NATSUME
Come Join the Parade!
Save the Sunshine Islands!
6:00
Day 4 (Wed)
Moe
Help
14720G
7:00
Day 7 (Sat)
Help
Pick Up
15559G
Stamina
Fullness
Spring
AM
Menu
EVERYONE
E
Alcohol Reference
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org
Wii
NINTENDO DS
NATSUME
Serious Fun
www.natsume.com
EVERYONE
E
Comic Mischief
Use of Alcohol
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org

Good Turnip

H. Goddess Festival Today!

So you'd better be ready to cheer for me, Mark!

Natalie

Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. ©2006 Nintendo. Nintendo DS is a trademark of Nintendo. ©2006 Nintendo. Harvest Moon, Natsume and Serious Fun are registered trademarks of Natsume Inc. ©2009 Natsume Inc. ©2009 Marvelous Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

ADVERTISEMENT

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Wii
TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM
ULTIMATE ALL-STARS
CAPCOM

TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM

PLATFORM: Wii

Capcom's famed "VS" tag-team fighting series returns! Tatsunoko VS. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars pairs over 20 heroes from Capcom's and Tatsunoko's most revered series including Street Fighter, MegaMan, Science Ninja Team Gatchaman, Yatterman and more. Take on the next generation of "VS" gameplay with multi-hit aerial combos, thrilling simultaneous partner attacks and over-the-top screen-filling signature hyper combos. Then see who is the best fighter in the world with the worldwide Wi-Fi online matchmaking feature. Tatsunoko VS. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars. Two sides. One battle. It's all kinds of awesome.
Available January 26, 2010.

tatsunoko.vscapcom.com

HARVEST MOON: ANIMAL PARADE

PLATFORM: Wii

There's Trouble in Harmonica Town!

Crops aren't growing, the wind isn't blowing, and the five elemental bells are missing. Only the power of the Harvest King can revive the land, but he's nowhere to be found. Can you find the five bells, awaken the Harvest King, and save the town?

Grow crops, expand your farm, raise livestock, and build a family!

www.natsume.com

Wii
HARVEST MOON
ANIMAL PARADE
NATSUME

Wii
NINTENDO DS
MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES
SEGA

MARIO & SONIC at the OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

PLATFORM: Wii / Nintendo DS

The legendary rivalry explodes in an all new winter sports competition! Play as your favorite Mario and Sonic character and take to the snow and ice in head-to-head competitive events, as well as those requiring solid teamwork. The stage is set for a winter Olympic experience like no other. Nothing's cooler!

www.olympicvideogames.com

EVERYONE TO TEEN
E-T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Game trademarks and copyrights are properties of their respective owners.
Nintendo properties are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2009 Nintendo.

ADVERTISEMENT

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

WE CHEER 2

PLATFORM: Wii

WE CHEER 2
Wii
CHEER

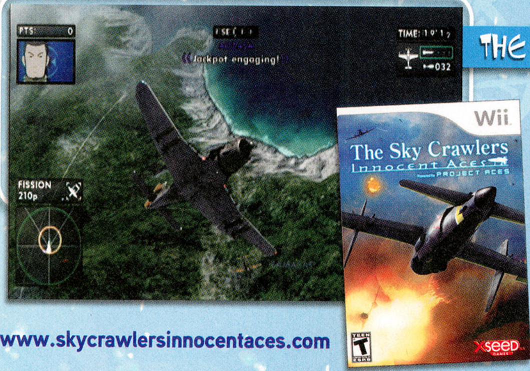
Raise Those Pom-Poms! It's time to step into the spotlight and pull off some high kicking, high jumping electrifying moves. We Cheer™2 brings the excitement and fun of cheerleading back to the Wii™ console. Use one or both of your Wii Remote™ controllers* as virtual pom-poms and get ready to show your team spirit while you kick, jump, flip, spin and dance to the rhythm of the 30 hottest chart topping hits. Master your moves with precision and timing to beat the other squads for the #1 spot at the championship tournament!

Get ready to show your We Cheer 2 spirit! Join the team! Available now!

www.wecheergame.com

**Additional Wii Remote controllers sold separately.*

THE SKY CRAWLERS: INNOCENT ACES



PLATFORM: Wii

The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces is the latest flight simulation game from Project Aces, the development team behind the Ace Combat series. Holding the Nunchuk™ controller in the right hand as the flight control stick and the Wii Remote controller in the left hand as the throttle, the unique controls of the Wii™ console are fully utilized to simulate the controls of sitting in an actual cockpit.

The somber story of a world that needs war to survive is told with a combination of animated cut-scenes and voiced in-game sequences during battle.

www.skycrawlersinnocentaces.com

JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR: THE GAME

Wii
JAMES CAMERON'S
AVATAR
THE GAME
NINTENDO DS
UBISOFT

PLATFORM: Wii / Nintendo DS

James Cameron's AVATAR™: THE GAME will take you deep into the heart of Pandora, an alien planet that is as beautiful as it is deadly. Play as the Na'vi, Pandora indigenous people and discover creatures and other wildlife the likes of which have never been seen in the world of video games before. When conflict erupts between the RDA Corporation, a space-faring consortium in search of valuable resources, and the Na'vi, gamers will find themselves thrust into a fight for the heart of a planet and the fate of a civilization.

www.avatarmoviegame.com

News

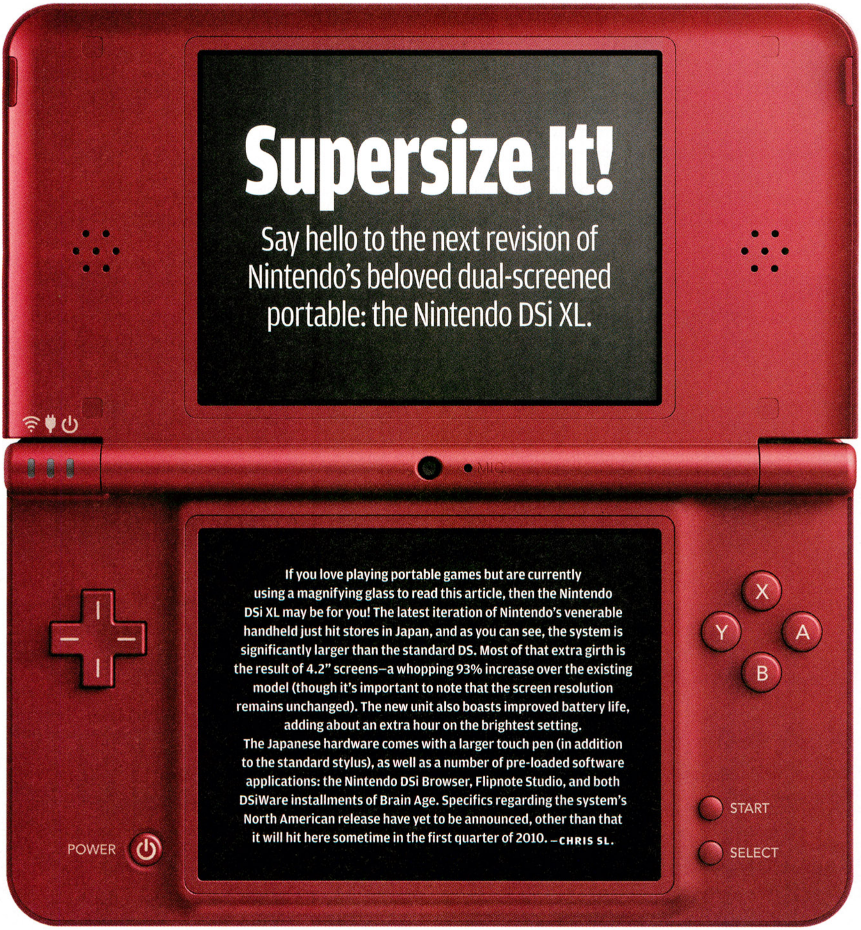
ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PLAY

MENTAL MIGHT

FEELING BLUE

Nintendo GAME BOY

HALL OF FAMER



Supersize It!

Say hello to the next revision of Nintendo's beloved dual-screened portable: the Nintendo DSi XL.

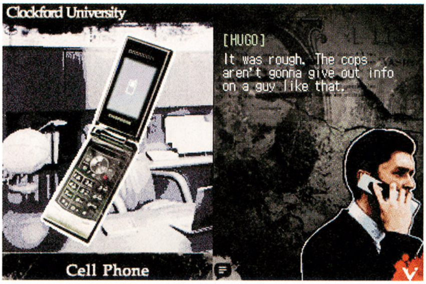
If you love playing portable games but are currently using a magnifying glass to read this article, then the Nintendo DSi XL may be for you! The latest iteration of Nintendo's venerable handheld just hit stores in Japan, and as you can see, the system is significantly larger than the standard DS. Most of that extra girth is the result of 4.2" screens—a whopping 93% increase over the existing model (though it's important to note that the screen resolution remains unchanged). The new unit also boasts improved battery life, adding about an extra hour on the brightest setting.

The Japanese hardware comes with a larger touch pen (in addition to the standard stylus), as well as a number of pre-loaded software applications: the Nintendo DSi Browser, Flipnote Studio, and both DSiWare installments of Brain Age. Specifics regarding the system's North American release have yet to be announced, other than that it will hit here sometime in the first quarter of 2010. —CHRIS SL.

ACTUAL SIZE

Here We Go Again

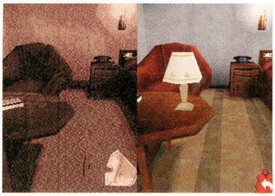
The murder-mystery masterminds behind Hotel Dusk have struck... **Again**.



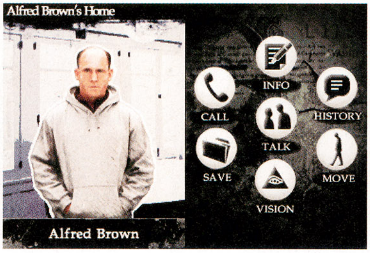
[HUGO]
It was rough. The cops aren't gonna give out info on a guy like that.

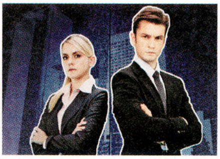
After it fell off the map for almost a year, we were beginning to worry that Again had been quietly cancelled. So it came as a pleasant surprise when Tecmo announced that the game would finally be coming to North America next March. Developed by Cing, who previously scored a surprise hit with 2007's Hotel Dusk: Room 215, Again marks the studio's return to the mystery-adventure genre. As with Hotel Dusk, you'll play the game by holding your DS sidewise like a book, but the similarities end there. The pencil-sketch graphics have been replaced with still photos and video of real actors, the claustrophobic hotel setting has been supplanted by dozens of different New Jersey locales, and the hard-boiled realism of Hotel Dusk has given way to a story with a more fantastical conceit.

You play as hero Jonathan Weaver, an FBI agent who, in his youth, was the only survivor of an unsolved killing spree. The game begins with Weaver receiving a message that "it's about to happen all over again." Fortunately, Weaver possesses the ability to project the events of 19 years ago on the left screen of a Nintendo DS so that players can compare them with the equivalent present-day locations on the right. With careful observation of the differences between the two eras, players can solve the crimes of the past and stop the tragedy from happening again. **—CASEY L.**



Weaver's special ability lets you compare the past to the present.

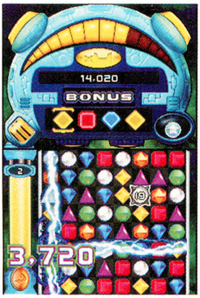




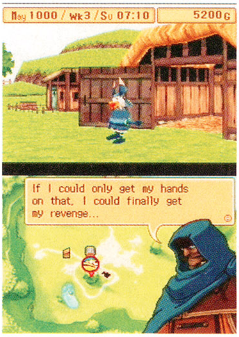
What a Twist!

This February, **Bejeweled Twist** makes the move to the Nintendo DS with new features.

In addition to appearing in a simpler form on DSiWare, PopCap's update to its classic gem puzzler Bejeweled is headed for a Nintendo DS Game Card. Bejeweled Twist puts a spin on the original's addictive formula by replacing the gem-swapping with a new way to match the colorful crystals: rotating them clockwise in groups of four to make a match.



Building on the downloadable release, Twist adds a Zen mode for the times you just want to match gems without the fear of losing or a clock constantly counting down. There's also a timed Blitz mode: you have five minutes to score as many points as possible. Finally, the Challenge mode presents gem-based puzzles with specific solutions. To top it off, this version works with the DSiWare release for Classic-mode multiplayer. **—RANDY N.**

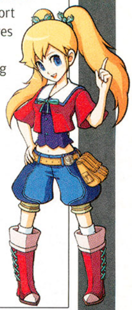


If I could only get my hands on that, I could finally get my revenge...

A New Domestic Breed

Monster Rancher DS is set for a March release.

DS devotees interested in monster-breeding can abort their wistful stares toward Tokyo: Tecmo is bringing Monster Rancher DS (known as Monster Farm DS 2: Yomigaeru! Master Breeder Densetsu in Japan) to North America. This installment offers a "series compilation" experience, providing ample servings of nostalgia (in the forms of familiar characters and monsters) to gratify longtime franchise fans. But it won't live entirely in the past; new gameplay mechanics take advantage of the DS handheld's unique input options, with players generating monsters by speaking into the microphone or drawing pictures via the stylus. The breeding begins this March. **—PATRICK C.**



Brains and Brawn

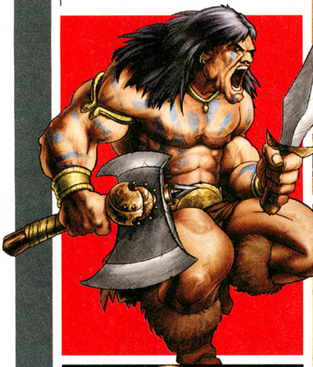
The popular Bejeweled-style RPG series returns to its fantasy roots with **Puzzle Quest II** for Nintendo DS.

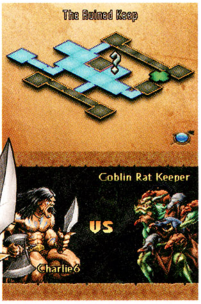
The original Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords won people over with its combination of addictive Bejeweled-style gameplay and traditional RPG elements. And while the second game in the franchise, the sci-fi-themed Puzzle Quest: Galactrix, was certainly a fun adventure, it lost the instant accessibility of the first title by complicating the all-important puzzle portion of the game. Now D3Publisher and developer Infinite Interactive are refining what worked about the original for Puzzle Quest II on Nintendo DS.

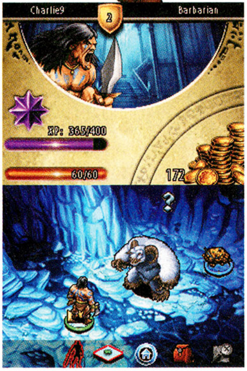
Fortunately, the basic gameplay remains pretty much unchanged from Challenge of the Warlords. You select a character class (this time you have a choice between Assassin, Inquisitor, War Mage, and Barbarian) and get quests from anyone who needs help—a musophobic citizen who needs you to defeat a nearby swarm of rats, for instance. Once you've engaged the enemy, the turn-based puzzle battle begins. As in the original game, you use the stylus to match three or more tiles of the same type to clear them from the playing field. If you match three skulls, you'll launch a physical attack on your opponent immediately. If you match colored gems (blue, green, red, yellow, and the brand-new purple), you'll accumulate that particular type of mana, which can be spent on magic spells. The original Puzzle Quest had gold tiles, as well, but Puzzle Quest II has you getting gold after battles. You can be rewarded with weapons, too, which aren't just modifiers for your physical attacks; you actually use the armaments by matching gauntlet tiles (like mana for magic, you have to stockpile gauntlet points to use these weapons).

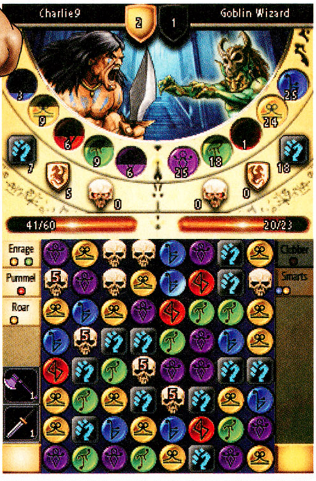
Occasionally minigames will pop up, and these also make use of the Bejeweled-esque puzzle style, only with special rules or tiles. At one point you are tasked with putting out a fire, for example, so you have to match a certain number of blue gems while avoiding the red ones that will make the fire worse. Later on, you must match door tiles to bash open a dungeon door. (You do the same kind of thing to pick locks and disarm traps.)

In addition to the single-player campaign, Puzzle Quest II will feature the same multiplayer options as the first title, as well as "some surprises." We'll have to wait until the game's spring 2010 release date nears before we find out more. **—JUSTIN C.**

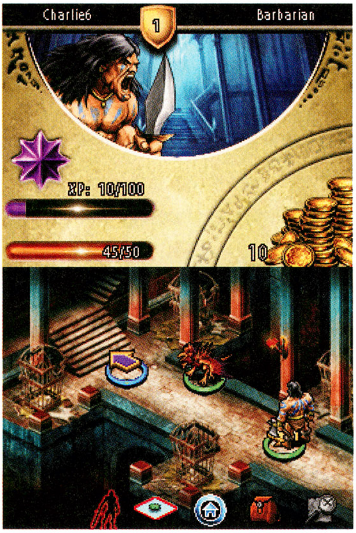








[Above] There may be some new icons on the grid, but the gameplay should still feel familiar.



GAME WATCH

forecast

Wii		
Arc Rise Fantasia	Ignition	SUM 10
Calling	Hudson	SPR 10
City Builder	Virtual Play Games	2/10
Data East Arcade Classics	Majesco	1/10
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	2010
Endless Ocean 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	1/10
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	1/10
Fragile: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	XSEED	3/10
Gladiator A.D.	TBA	TBA
Grease	505	TBA
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
How to Train Your Dragon	Activision	3/10
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
Let's Play Ballerina	Deep Silver	2010
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	SUM 10
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	2010
Monado: Beginning of the World	Nintendo	TBA
Monkey Ball: Step & Roll	Sega	SPR 10
Monster Hunter Tri	Capcom	3/10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	Ubisoft	1/10
Pizza Delivery Boy	Majesco	WIN 10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	2/10
Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	1/10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	1/10
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	TBA
Sengoku Basara Samurai Heroes	Capcom	2010
Shiren the Wanderer	Atlus	2/10
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	Q4 09
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	2/10
Span Smasher	Nintendo	TBA
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	2010
Sushi Go Round	SouthPeak	1/10
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	Capcom	1/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
Trauma Team	Atlus	2010

NINTENDO DS		
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	Capcom	2/10
Again	Tecmo	3/10
Bejeweled Twist	PopCap	2/10
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	D3Publisher	SPR 10
Crime Scene	SouthPeak	2/10
Daniel X: The Ultimate Power	THQ	1/10
The Daring Game for Girls	Majesco	2/10
Deca Sports DS	Hudson	SPR 10
Dementium II	SouthPeak	2/10
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Easy Piano	Valcon	2010
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	1/10
Foto Showdown	Konami	Q1 10
Ghost Trick	Capcom	2010
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	Majesco	2010
Glory of Heracles	Nintendo	1/10
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
Grease	505	TBA
House M.D.	Legacy	TBA
How to Train Your Dragon	Activision	3/10
Infinite Space	Sega	SPR 10
Let's Play Ballerina	Deep Silver	2010
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	SPR 10
Monster Rancher DS	Tecmo	3/10
Montessori Music	SouthPeak	Q1 10
Picross 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pokémon HeartGold	Nintendo	SPR 10
Pokémon SoulSilver	Nintendo	SPR 10
Prank Your Neighbor	Dream-catcher	TBA
Puzzle Chronicles	Konami	2/10
Puzzle Quest II	D3Publisher	SPR 10
Ragnarok DS	XSEED	2/10
Rooms: The Main Building	Hudson	SPR 10
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	Atlus	SPR 10
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	2/10
Tetris	Majesco	SPR 10
WarioWare D.I.Y.	Nintendo	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. *TENTATIVE TITLE NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

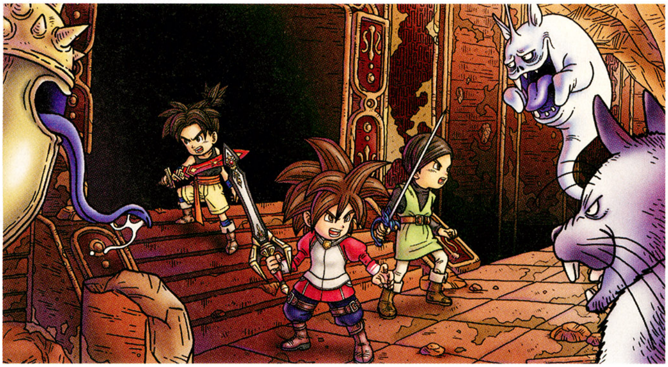
Your online source for great t-shirts

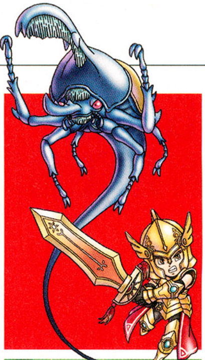
SAVE 20%
visit 80sTees.com/atari
Limited time offer.

We've got Super Mario Bros. Hats!

80sTees.com
great t-shirts for the kid in us all!

1-866-80sTees
www.80sTees.com/atari



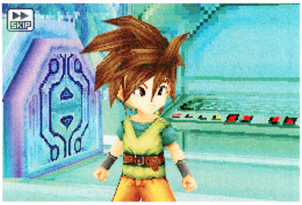


Back in Blue

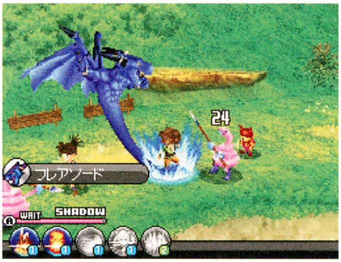
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadows brings a shot of action to the ever-shifting RPG franchise.

The Blue Dragon franchise was born as a turn-based RPG, reinvented as a real-time strategy game, and has now re-emerged as an action-RPG with character-customization elements. Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadows allows players to create an original hero of either gender and lead a party of computer-controlled allies (the familiar Blue Dragon cast) through a new adventure set a year after the events in Blue Dragon Plus. In addition to a wide array of weapons and armaments, players can unlock and equip up to six of the franchise's magical shadows and fire off their special abilities with a tap of the stylus. No word yet on whether the Western release will preserve the Japanese version's multiplayer component, which allowed players to team up and tackle special bosses together over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

No two Blue Dragon games have ever had a developer or publisher in common, and Awakened Shadows continues this strange tradition. This time, tri-Crescendo (who recently worked on Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon) is handling the game's development, while D3Publisher is hard at work localizing the game for a spring 2010 North American release. —**CASEY L.**



That hair should probably be registered as a dangerous weapon.



The Lad's a Legend

The National Toy Hall of Fame inducts Nintendo's Game Boy.

Nintendo GAME BOY
SELECT
START
B
A

Anyone old enough to have squeezed the original Game Boy in a fervent, prepubescent death grip knows how transformative that device was; it single-handedly made on-the-go gaming relevant, and family car trips would never be the same. Recognizing the historical heft of Nintendo's eldest handheld son, the Strong National Museum of Play inducted the Game Boy into the National Toy Hall of Fame on November 5th. The portable wonder joins an exclusive roster of iconic playthings; it will keep company with such pillars of childhood as Play-Doh and Etch A Sketch. The boy's grown up! —**PATRICK C.**

Portable Ivories

Due in early 2010, Easy Piano for DS comes bundled with a 13-note, full-octave external keyboard peripheral, which publisher Valcon Games promises will make learning the instrument simpler than ever. We're ready to unleash our inner Beethoven on the morning bus. —**STEVE T.**

Bring the Stars into Alignment!
Sakura Wars™
~ So Long, My Love ~
"Voted for the Most Wanted RPG in 2009!"
- RPGamer.com
Available Winter 2009 / 2010
www.sakurawars.us

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.

PlayStation 2

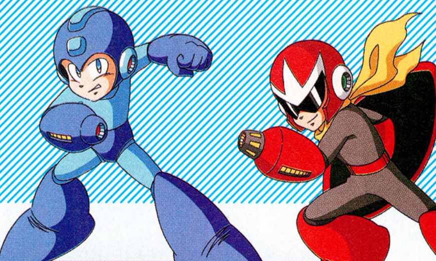
Wii™

RED ENTERTAINMENT

NIS America
www.NISAmerica.com

©SEGA ©RED All rights reserved. Licensed to and Published by NIS America, Inc. Distributed exclusively by KOEI Corporation. Sakura Wars is a trademark of SEGA and RED. "PlayStation", the "PS" Family logo and the "PS2" logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.

DOWNLOAD



IN THIS SECTION

WiiWARE PREVIEW
Mega Man 10

WiiWARE PREVIEW
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney

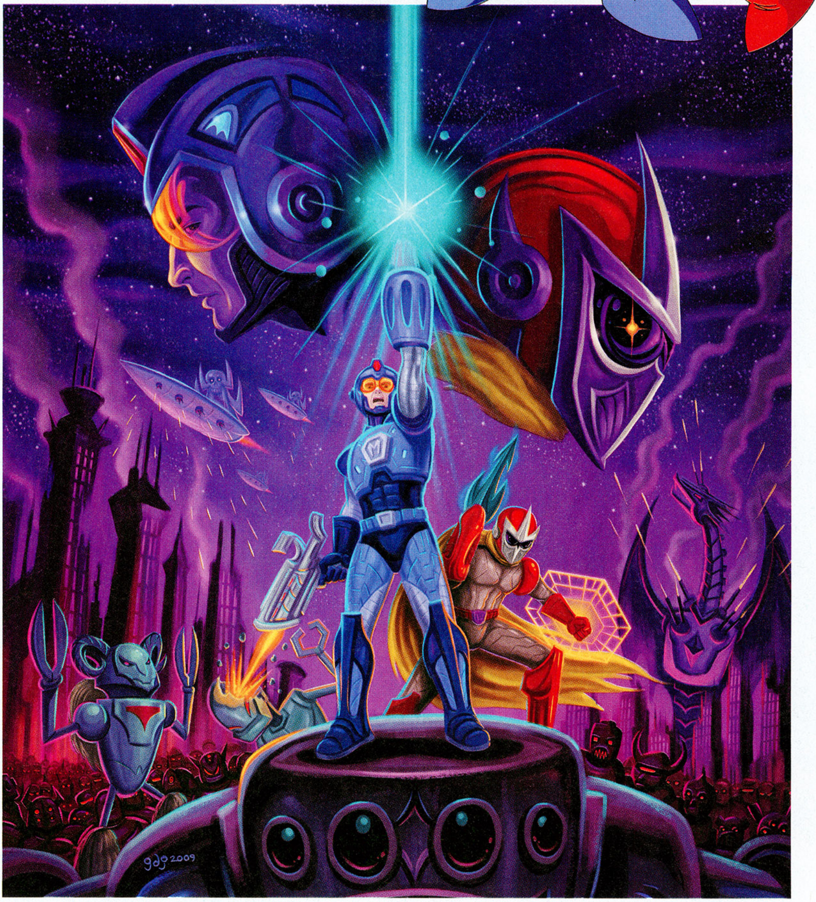
WiiWARE PREVIEW
Tomena Sanner

RESULTS
Everybody Votes Channel Data

WiiWARE REVIEWS
"AHA! I GOT IT!" ESCAPE GAME
CARNIVAL KING
DRAGON MASTER SPELL CASTER
FAMILY CARD GAMES
FROGGER RETURNS
GHOST MANSION PARTY
TALES FROM MONKEY ISLAND CHAPTER 3: LAIR OF THE LEVIATHAN

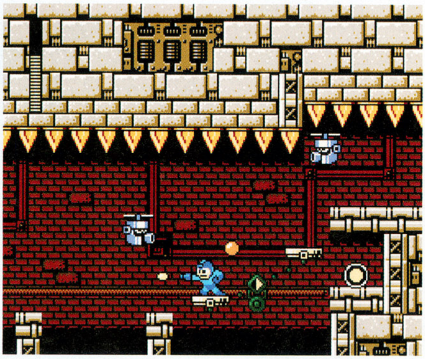
VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
CYBERNOID
GOLDEN AXE
FIGHTING STREET
INDIANS JONES' GREATEST ADVENTURES
R-TYPE
STREET FIGHTER II: CHAMPION EDITION
WONDER BOY III: THE DRAGON'S TRAP
ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS

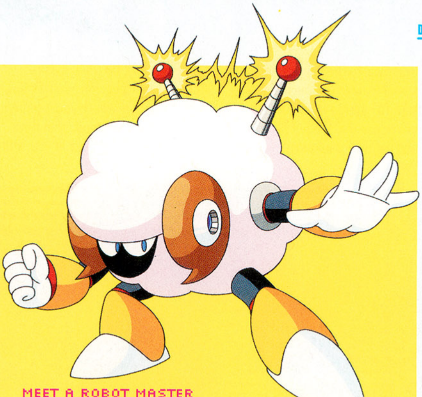
DSiWARE REVIEWS
ARCADE BOWLING
ART STYLE: DIGIDRIVE
BATTLE OF GIANTS: DRAGONS—BRONZE EDITION
BOMBERMAN BLITZ
ELECTROPLANKTON BEATNES, HANENBOW, NANOCARP, REC-REC, TRAPY
PICTUREBOOK GAMES: THE ROYAL BLUFF
ROBOT RESCUE
SUDOKU
VIKING INVASION



Tenth Time's the Charm

New challenges! New bosses! Retro fun! The legendary Blue Bomber serves up another smorgasbord of old-school cool with Mega Man 10 on WiiWare.

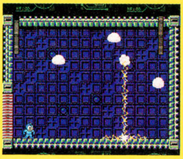


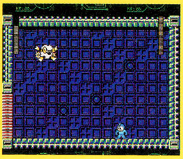


MEET A ROBOT MASTER

SHEEP MAN

Easily the strangest of the Mega Man 10 bosses, Sheep Man does, indeed, look like a set of robot arms and legs attached to a fluffy sheep...or possibly a cloud. In fact, Sheep Man can turn himself into four clouds that hover overhead and attack from above. When you defeat him, you'll earn the Thunder Wool, which floats up at an angle before releasing an electrical burst. Perhaps the boss is an homage to Philip K. Dick's sci-fi novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*





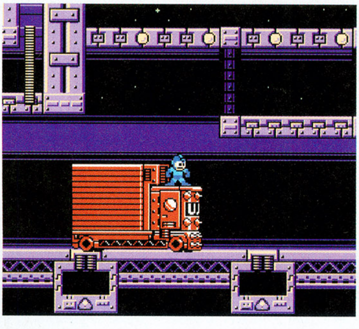
You can't keep a good robot down. Just ask Dr. Wily. The evil scientist has tried time and time again to defeat Mega Man and take over the world, but the blue hero just keeps coming back for more. And soon he'll return to WiiWare for an unbelievable tenth installment of classic action in Capcom's appropriately titled Mega Man 10.

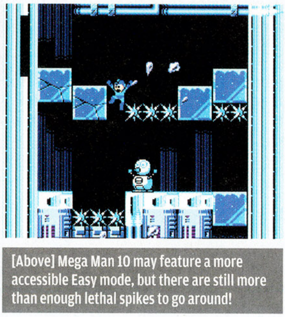
Like Mega Man 9 (released for WiiWare in 2008), Mega Man 10 remains true to the series's roots with 8-bit-style graphics and sound and tried-and-true Mega Man gameplay. Sticking to the formula that made the series so successful and long-lived (December 17 marks Mega Man's 22nd birthday), Mega Man charges through horizontally and vertically scrolling levels, blasting enemy robots, leaping perilous bottomless pits, and avoiding traps such as instant-kill spikes. When you defeat one of the eight Robot Master bosses, you'll acquire his special weapon, which you can then use on other foes. As always, you can tackle the stages in any order, and the key to success lies in figuring out which bosses are vulnerable to which special weapons, and then fighting them in the most advantageous sequence.

Though the concept remains the same in Mega Man 10, the game features some aspects uniquely its own, such as the story: this time you're fighting to find parts of a vaccine-making device needed to cure robots of Robotenza—a virus that causes infected 'bots to overheat and go out of control. Another cool addition is the ability, from the get-go, to select from characters other than Mega Man. Mega Man's "brother" Proto Man is ready to lend a hand; like in Mega Man 9, Proto Man can slide, charge up his shots, and deflect enemy projectiles with his shield. There's a third playable character, as well, but Capcom's keeping the hero's identity a secret as of press time.

Naturally, the game also provides a fresh assortment of stages, and dangers to go with them. In a computer-themed stage—complete with microchips and display monitors in the background—you'll face mouse-pointer-shaped enemies, which draw squares that fly at you from across the screen. The stage also has unique gimmicks, such as interwoven sets of colored blocks that disappear a second or two after you touch them; you'll need to quickly figure out which blocks to step on to avoid falling to your doom. You'll come across treadmills as well, but they don't function like you might expect; as you run on them, energy flows to nearby devices that activate handy floating platforms.

Another thrilling stage is set amidst dangerous lava pools. Much of the level is vertically oriented, but getting to the top isn't easy when green conveyor belts threaten to push you back down and small, block-shaped enemies can duplicate themselves almost as fast as you can blast them. Arcs of fireball enemies



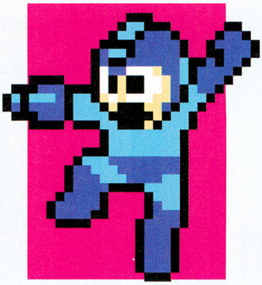


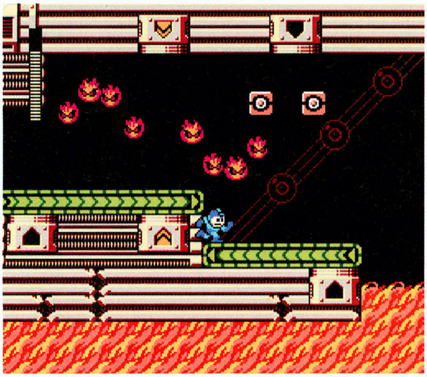
[Above] Mega Man 10 may feature a more accessible Easy mode, but there are still more than enough lethal spikes to go around!

(identical to the flaming enemies from Fire Man's stage in Mega Man 1!) emerge from ducts to knock you into the fiery abyss, and nasty bird midbosses attack relentlessly. On the opposite end of the spectrum is a freezing glacier stage where you'll contend with enemy snowmen that toss their exploding heads at you, and ice blocks that break if you step on or shoot them.

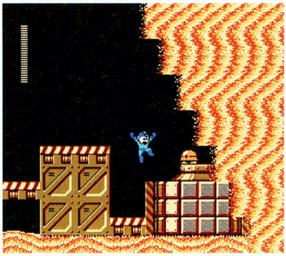
Other levels offer their own special hazards. In a sewer stage you'll have to overcome flowing water that hampers your jumping abilities and fight sluglike versions of the classic Met enemies that can shoot you with traction-reducing purple slime, while in a sports-stadium level you'll face baseball-throwing foes and soccer-ball platforms that rise up a moment after you shoot them. The stadium's midboss is a giant robotic soccer goal that acts as its own goalie; you must avoid its powerful fists, then jump on its hands so you can blast it in the face. One of the toughest obstacles is in a desert stage; sandstorms periodically sweep through the area, completely obscuring the level and threatening to push you into a pit or a wall of spikes if you haven't found a safe spot.

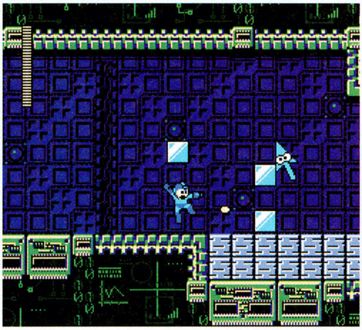
Though the going can get pretty tough, the developers at Inti Creates aren't totally heartless—alongside the usual health and weapon-energy capsules, they've brought back the Yashichi item from the first Mega Man, which completely restores your health and special-weapon energy. And if you still need an edge, you can visit a shop between levels (just like in Mega Man 9), where you can spend bolts on extra lives, health-replenishing E-Tanks,

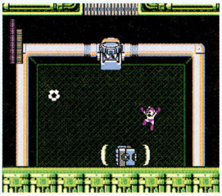




[Below] Beware of the sandstorms in Commando Man's stage. If you don't find a safe spot they'll likely push you to your doom.







THE TENTH DEGREE

If there's anyone who knows anything about Mega Man, it's the character's creator, Keiji Inafune. Inafune has been with Mega Man since the very beginning, and in addition to being one of the top executives at Capcom, he's the creative supervisor on Mega Man 10. He recently took time out from his busy schedule to answer our questions about the landmark tenth entry in the Mega Man series.

NINTENDO POWER **What did you learn from Mega Man 9 that has influenced the development of Mega Man 10?**

KEIJI INAFUNE Mega Man 9 was developed with the theme of reviving the NES style—and it was hugely supported by so many Mega Man fans and longtime players. We accomplished our goal of bringing back an NES-style game with the same look and the game balance.

Having had success with MM9, we decided with MM10's development to first listen to the voice of old-school gamers who always wanted to be good at Mega Man and ex-gamers who haven't played games in a while. They are the ones who loved Mega Man but could not spend as much time playing these days as they did when they were kids. Without practice they had a hard time clearing stages. So our intention is to provide the fun of Mega Man to a wider range of players, including those who forgot how much they enjoyed Mega Man games.

Was there any feedback you received from fans on Mega Man 9 that was especially surprising?

It was a great, happy surprise for us that the NES style was so widely accepted. In the early stage of the development, we internally discussed the option of having both old-school NES style graphics and next-gen style, [and we'd allow] the player to choose between the two. However, we believed that a revival of the NES style would surprise people and be appreciated. And the result exceeded our expectations—so many people enthusiastically welcomed the NES style.

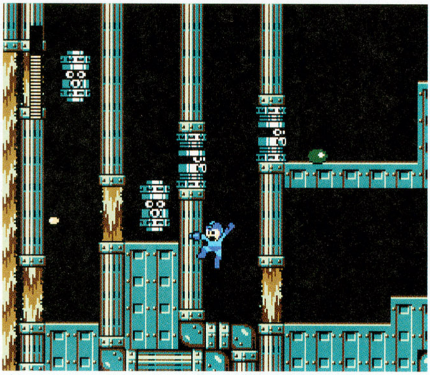
What do you like about the NES-style graphics?

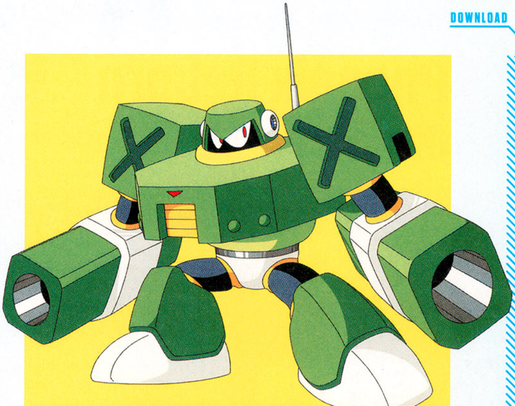
The trait of NES graphics is simplicity and coolness (especially now). We also like the fact that the NES is the origin of home-console games and that it is the "original" platform.

We tried to push the envelope with MM9 based on the characteristics of the original Mega Man. In other words, development of MM9 took a temporary defensive boosts, and other items.

But even more important is the inclusion of variable difficulty settings. As good as Mega Man 9 was, it was insanely tough; the Normal difficulty was enough to make grown gamers cry, and the optional difficulty settings (Hero and Superhero) only made things tougher. While purists can get the same intense challenge out of Mega Man 10's default difficulty, the game also features a much more accessible Easy mode that not only lets Mega Man receive less punishment and dish out more, but also slows enemies and their projectiles and adds extra platforms to make the stages less treacherous. The result is that the difficulty in Easy mode feels more in line with that of Mega Man 2 or 3 rather than the punishing challenge of Mega Man 9. On the other hand, if you really want to test your skills, you can opt for Hard mode.

To top it off, Mega Man 10 will feature multiple modes, loads of in-game achievement-style challenges, online rankings, and downloadable add-on content. But most importantly, Mega Man 10 will provide another authentic, 8-bit-style experience packed with the kind of action that fans have come to know and love, yet at the same time will deliver new gameplay elements and broader accessibility. And players shouldn't have to wait long to experience it—Capcom expects to have Mega Man 10 available on WiiWare this March. —**CHRIS H.**

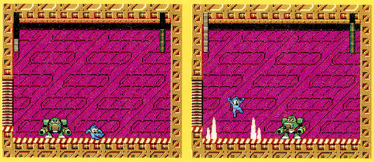




MEET A ROBOT MASTER

COMMANDO MAN

Commando Man is a no-nonsense Robot Master. He's aggressive, he's tough, and he'll blow you into pieces if you give him a chance. Not only does Commando Man's primary attack have a large area of impact that's hard to avoid, but he can stun you by pounding the ground, and unleash homing attacks that are very hazardous to your health. Oh, and he inflicts a lot of damage, too. Has Mega Man finally met his match?



different direction from that of the MM series up until the eighth installment. Until MM8, we focused on incorporating state-of-the-art technology and developing a high-tech MM. But MM9 and MM10 are different. In MM9 we focused on the NES style, and freed ourselves from the latest technology; [instead we] pursued our unique ideas and designs. We valued that idea and decided to also further pursue it in MM10.

What can you reveal about the bosses? Will there be any more female characters?
There are no woman bosses this time, but there will be unique bosses and ones that MM fans will feel nostalgic about.... This time around, we invited young designers to design bosses in hopes of giving them a chance to grow from the experience. I supervised their work and provided direction to maintain the MM universe. You will be happy to meet all the unique bosses of the MM world, but they are not going to go easy on you!

Will Mega Man get any new moves, or will any other classic elements that weren't present in MM9 return for 10?
Mega Man's abilities will remain the same as they were in the last installment. We tried to keep the "simple and fun" aspect of the game, which was a theme of MM9.

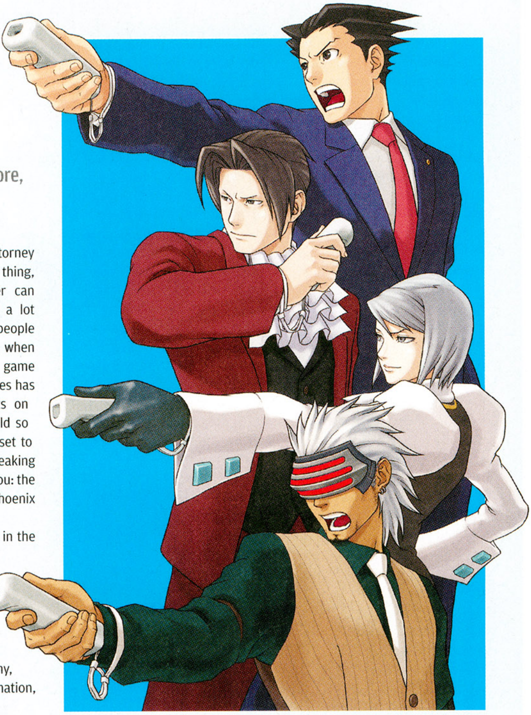
What is the most challenging part of creating a new entry in such a long-running series?
The challenge for a long-running series is nothing but to meet the expectations of all the fans that increase in number with each installment. In particular, it's always challenging to try to exceed MM2 and MM4, which are highly regarded in the series.

Why do you think that old-school 8-bit Mega Man is still successful and still embraced by so many fans?
The appreciation from the fans is what drives MM game design, which has attracted many game players since the beginning of the series. Despite the relatively simple structure of the game, the MM series has its unique characteristics that make players so excited to play it. In many cases, players will feel challenged and excited as opposed to feeling defeated when they hit a wall. The series has been a classic since the NES era and we've always strived for the best-quality game. I think that the fans really feel our efforts in that aspect. In reality, there are probably more MM fans out there than I could imagine, and we will continue on to make fun MM games for those MM enthusiasts.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?
Well, this is not related to the topic, but... congratulations on the 250th issue of Nintendo Power!! I hope you keep the fans excited with your cool articles and quality content and go on to publish your 300th issue, or later on your 1,000th issue!

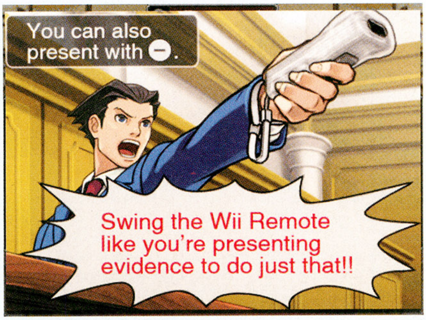
Phoenix Reborn on WiiWare

You may have played **Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney** before, but never quite like this. Gaming's most famous lawyer returns on WiiWare.



If Capcom's Ace Attorney series has proved one thing, it's that being a lawyer can be a lot more fun—and a lot funnier—than most people would ever expect (well, when you're a fictitious video game lawyer, at least). The series has yielded four installments on the Nintendo DS handheld so far, and another (Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth) is set to debut in early 2010. If, however, you happened to miss those groundbreaking titles, or if you simply don't own a DS, Capcom has just the thing for you: the first three games in the series, starring heroic defense attorney Phoenix Wright, are headed to WiiWare in 2010.

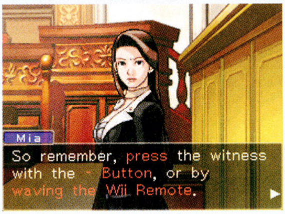
Slated for release in January for 1,000 Wii Points, the first game in the series, Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney, lets you get acquainted with the titular spiky-haired lawyer and his associates (such as Phoenix's spirit-medium assistant Maya Fey and his friend-turned-rival Miles Edgeworth) as you take on four increasingly tough murder cases. You'll point and click your way to not-guilty verdicts by exploring crime scenes, talking to suspects, gathering evidence, and then battling it out in courtroom duels by listening to witness testimony, performing cross-examinations, pressing witnesses for more information, and exposing lies by presenting contradictory evidence at just the right time. Although the WiiWare version won't have microphone-activated voice commands like the DS version, it will feature new gesture controls for pressing witnesses and using evidence; when Phoenix points his index finger in the game, you'll essentially be doing the same with the Wii Remote controller. (Most of the game, however, will utilize traditional controls.) Sounds such as "Objection!" will emanate from the remote's speaker, as well.


You can also present with ⊖.

Swing the Wii Remote like you're presenting evidence to do just that!!

[Above] Like any good lawyer, Phoenix keeps his Wii Remote with him at all times.

The second game in the series, Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All (which adds new cases, new characters, and the magical Magatama jewel for revealing witness secrets during your investigation phase) is scheduled to hit in March, followed by Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations (which delves deeper into Phoenix's past and lets you play as his mentor, Mia Fey) in May. In addition, Rise from the Ashes, the bonus chapter from the first Ace Attorney game, will be released as downloadable content for a nominal fee. Whether you download all of Phoenix's adventures or just one installment, you'll be treated to quirky characters, confounding mysteries, and top-notch writing. And best of all, you don't need a law degree to play. —**CHRIS H.**

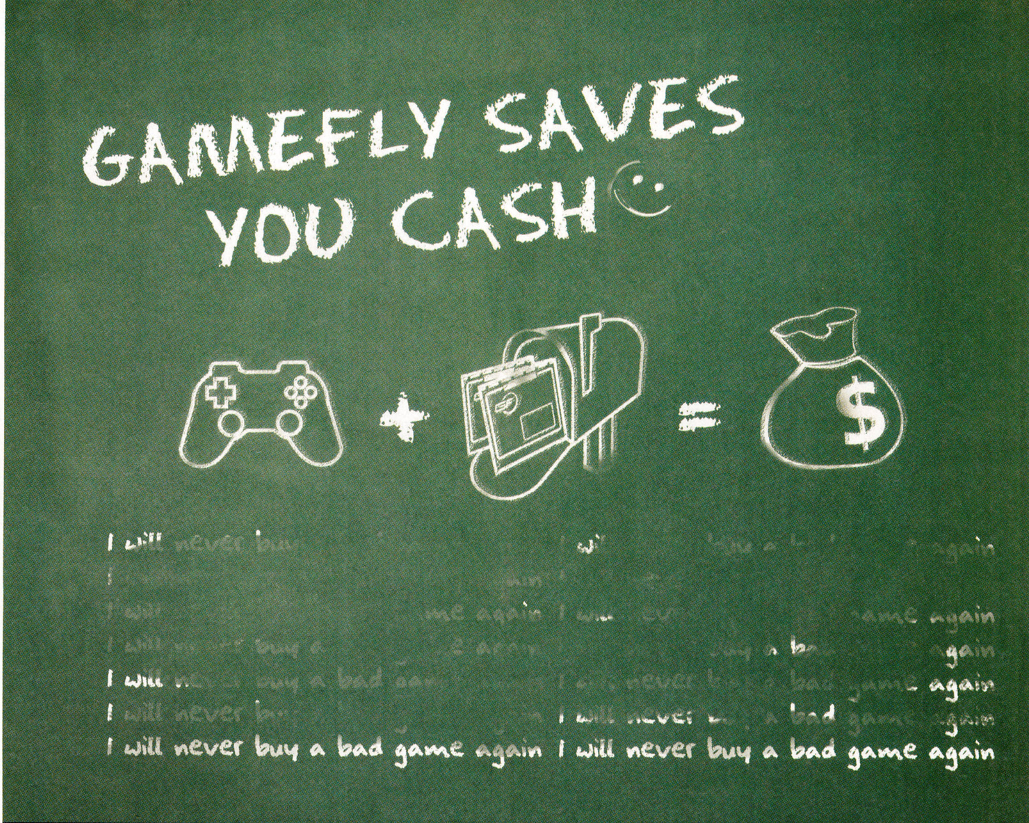


So remember, press the witness with the - Button, or by waving the Wii Remote.

Then allow me to remove that doubt from your mind, Your Honor...

Could you tell me about the day of the murder?

You must be 18 years of age or older and reside inside the 50 United States to use the GameFly service.


GAMEFLY SAVES YOU CASH
$
I will never buy a bad game again I will never buy a bad game again
I will never buy a bad game again I will never buy a bad game again

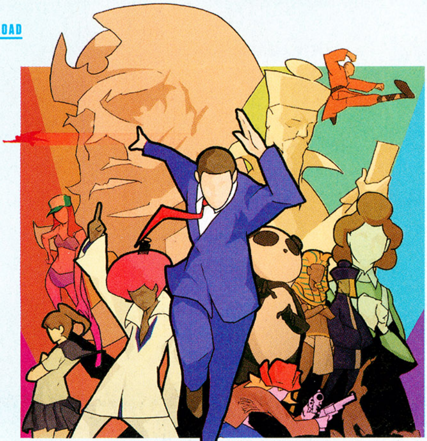
GAMEFLY.COM®

Video Game Rentals

Over 7,000 titles • No late fees • Free shipping

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA Spirit Tracks
NINTENDO DS
Wii
New SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii
UP TO 4 PLAYERS!
Wii
FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL BEARERS
SQUARE ENIX.

Download GameFly GameCenter for FREE on your iPhone™ and iPod Touch®



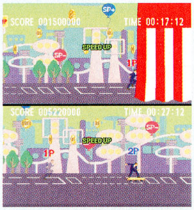
Running Wild!

Dash, jump, and dance your way past dinosaurs, aliens, and more in Konami's **Tomena Sanner** for WiiWare.

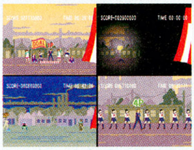
WiiWare is home to a lot of strange and unusual games, but one of the strangest is undoubtedly going to be Tomena Sanner from Konami. In this colorful side-scrolling action game (the title of which roughly translates to "Don't Stop Me"), you play Japanese businessman Hitoshi Susumu, who wants nothing more than to leave the office and get to the ultimate dance party. That's easier said than done, however; all manner of ludicrous obstacles are in his way, from cowgirls to zombies to robots to samurai to Tyrannosaurus rexes.

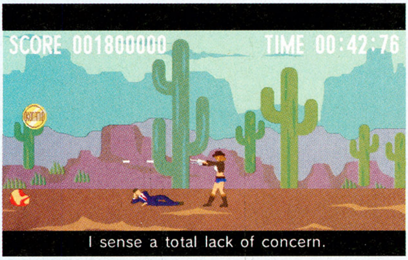
Since Hitoshi is kind of in a rush (the character runs automatically), it's up to you to use well-timed presses of the A Button to avoid whatever's in his way. Depending on the obstacle, you may find Hitoshi leaping, sliding, dancing, skiing, or even playing baseball, and in between hazards you can press A to nab power-ups or extra-point tokens. Expert obstacle-avoidance skills are rewarded with increased speed and extra time, but if you flub it you'll find yourself running out of both; if the time limit expires or you get knocked off the edge of the screen it's game over. On the other hand, if you successfully make it to the end of each of the game's nine stages you'll be able to get jiggy with it in a dancing-themed bonus stage in which you'll tap A as icons scroll past. To make things even more bizarre, tickers constantly running along the screen offer quirky commentary on the in-game action.

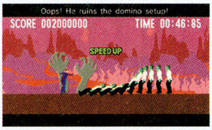
Up to four dance-crazed businessmen will be able to get in on the action simultaneously (via split-screen play) when Tomena Sanner hits North America in early 2010. —**CHRIS H.**


SCORE 001500000
TIME 00:17:12
SPEED UP
1P
SCORE 005220000
TIME 00:27:12
SPEED UP
1P
2P

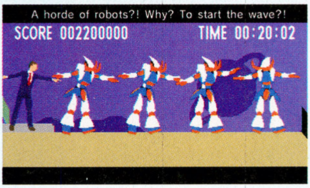
Race to the finish line in multiplayer mode. It offers up to four times the insanity!

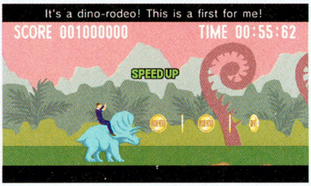



SCORE 001800000
TIME 00:42:76
I sense a total lack of concern.


Oops! He ruins the domino setup!
SCORE 002000000
TIME 00:46:85
SPEED UP

[Above] Nothing can slow down Hitoshi Susumu—not even a legion of zombies!


A horde of robots?! Why? To start the wave?!
SCORE 002200000
TIME 00:20:02

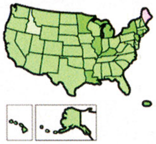

It's a dino-rodeo! This is a first for me!
SCORE 001000000
TIME 00:55:62
SPEED UP

SURVEY SAYS...

RECENT RESULTS from the EVERYBODY VOTES CHANNEL

During a typical year, how often will your photograph be taken by another person?

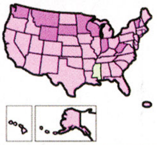
Less than twelve times:	Twelve times or more:
41.2%	58.8%



If you don't consider yourself photogenic, Maine's apparently the place to be.

Which toy do you think a cat will enjoy playing with more?

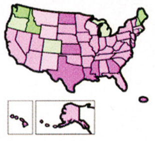
A piece of string:	A ball with a bell inside:
55.7%	43.3%



Cats in the north really like their string, but Mississippi kitties like balls and bells more.

For lunch, are you more likely to...

Go out to eat:	Brown-bag it:
55.8%	44.2%



What is it about the northern corners of the country that makes more folks bring their own lunches?

FROM A LEADER IN GAME DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

GET THE ULTIMATE SUMMER EXPERIENCE

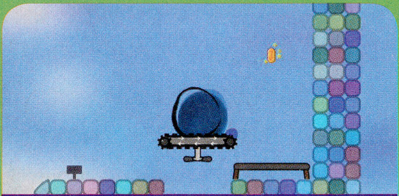
DIGIPEN ProjectFUN WORKSHOPS

DigiPen Institute of Technology, recognized by the industry as a premier game development college, presents a two-week summer workshop series designed to introduce participants of all experience levels to the fundamentals of *game programming*, *3D computer animation*, *game design* and *robotics*.

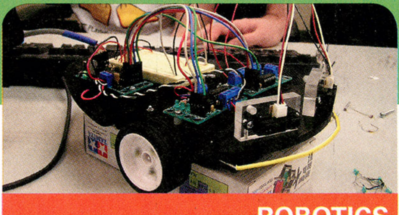
- **Make your own video game, 3D animation or robotic vehicle**
- **Get an opportunity to tour portions of Nintendo of America and the Microsoft Museum**
- **Engage in after-school activities including game tournaments and guest industry speakers**

GAME PROGRAMMING

3D ANIMATION



GAME DESIGN



ROBOTICS

Get a sneak peek of the Workshops at the **ProjectFUN Summer Workshop Preview Day** on Saturday, April 24!

Attendees will receive a **$100.00 discount** toward any one of the Summer Workshops.

To find out more, register for Preview Day, or research online options, please visit:

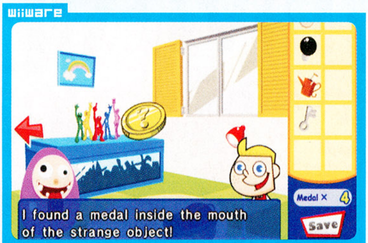
WORKSHOPS.DIGIPEN.EDU

DigiPen
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

5001 150th Ave NE
Redmond, WA 98052
(866) 478-5236
www.digipen.edu

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare


I found a medal inside the mouth of the strange object!

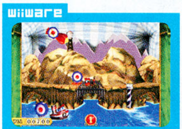
"AHA! I GOT IT!" ESCAPE GAME

PUBLISHER: **ATEAM** · GENRE: **PUZZLE/ADVENTURE** · Wii POINTS: **500**

This oddly titled game plays much like the countless "room escape" Flash games that can be found online. The goal is to explore every nook and cranny of a room and solve a series of item-based puzzles to escape. It may sound simple, but the game requires intense examination of your surroundings and the ability to decipher some obscure clues. Although the point-and-click controls work well most of the time, there are some moments when unintuitive motions make simple tasks more complicated than they need be. Aha's brain teasers aren't nearly as deep or as clever as those in other adventure games, such as Tales of Monkey Island, but for its low price, this provides a couple of hours of tricky fun. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



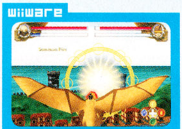
CARNIVAL KING

PUBLISHER: **INCREDIBLE TECHNOLOGIES**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **700**

Carnival King is a port of a 2002 arcade shooting-gallery game, and it is extremely faithful to the original. The graphics look spot-on, the cheesy barker does plenty of chatting, and—most importantly—the shooting is accurately reproduced with the Wii Remote. Unfortunately, you'll walk through the 15 rounds within half an hour, leaving you wanting more. Unless you're a big fan of attempting to beat your previous high score, this is over way too soon. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



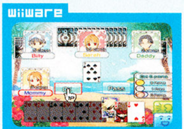
DRAGON MASTER SPELL CASTER

PUBLISHER: **STICKMEN STUDIOS**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Strong in concept but lacking in execution, Stickmen's dragon wrangler bites off more than it can chew. Motion-controlled flight is easy enough, but spell-and-melee battling exposes the finger-tangling weakness of the control scheme and the stiffness in the animation. You'll mash buttons just to make something happen. Four storylines and multiplayer options provide a lot of gameplay, though I'd gladly exchange quantity for quality. —**GEORGE S.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



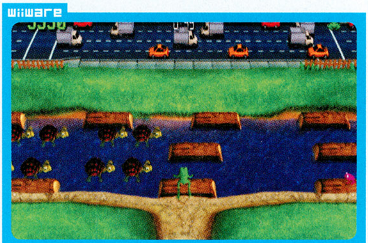
FAMILY CARD GAMES

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
GENRE: **CARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

If you've always dreamed of playing Daifugo on your Wii, look no further than Family Card Games. The other 99.99 percent of you who have never heard of this Japanese playing-card game can safely pass. Being new to Daifugo myself, I found it reasonably enjoyable, but there's little here to enhance the experience beyond what you'd get from a standard deck of playing cards. Even the one moderately cool thing—a Guilty Gear-themed deck—costs an extra buck. —**STEVE T.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



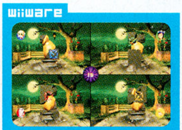
FROGGER RETURNS

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** · GENRE: **ACTION** · Wii POINTS: **500**

In recent years, Konami's hopping hero has been relegated to character-centric adventures that have had little to do with what made him a star, but Frogger Returns offers up the same traffic-dodging gameplay that put classic arcade Frogger on the map. The view is angled a little lower than that of the first title, making it a tad difficult to judge distance, but the play control is smoother than ever. Although the three levels that come after the iconic hop across the street and over the river don't quite live up to the perfect balance of that first jaunt, they do present new obstacles, such as steam vents and long subway trains. Add simultaneous multiplayer runs, and you have a solid game that builds off the original, with a more-rounded playing experience. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare



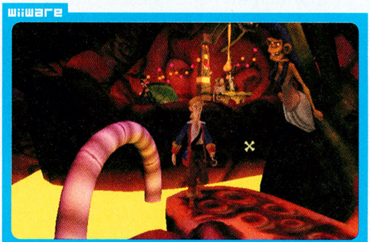
GHOST MANSION PARTY

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **PARTY GAME**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Ghost Mansion Party is essentially a budget Mario Party with a haunted-house theme. Up to four players travel along a track by rolling a die with the goal of collecting coins (the person with the most coins at the end wins) and gathering clues to solve a word puzzle. The primary way to get coins is by playing the very simplistic minigames. This makes the title accessible, but it's pretty boring for all but the greenest of gamers. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND CHAPTER 3: LAIR OF THE LEVIATHAN

PUBLISHER: **TELLTALE** · GENRE: **ADVENTURE** · Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Chris H's Pick

Telltale dishes up another swashbuckling adventure with the third installment of Tales of Monkey Island. Though the scope is more limited than that of the previous chapters, the game makes good use of its handful of environments, which are full of spot-on humor, well-constructed puzzles, cool character moments, and some nice nods to past Monkey Island games. There are no technical hiccups this time out, either, and the game features what might be the best end-credits sequence ever.

Recommended

Test the Best

WiiWare demos let you try out some of the top games.

Mira
Oh, quit whining, Tonbetty! This is just a demo of the lavish world conquest I'm about to embark on, right? Don't sweat it!

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: MY LIFE AS A DARKLORD

We'd like to think that the reviews on these pages go a long way toward helping Wii console users make informed decisions about what WiiWare titles to purchase, but now those decisions should be even easier thanks to the release of playable demos for select WiiWare titles. Available for free through the Wii Shop Channel, demos of five noteworthy games spanning a variety of genres were available as this issue went to press: Pokémon Rumble, World of Goo, Bit.Trip Beat, NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits, and Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a Darklord. Each demo consists of one or more levels of gameplay (some include several levels), and after you've played it you'll be taken to the Wii Shop Channel to have the opportunity to purchase the full game. If you've been on the fence about any of these titles, be sure to check out the demos as soon as you can. —**CHRIS H.**

NYXQUEST: KINDRED SPIRITS

0 of 6 collected
menu

WORLD OF GOO

virtual console

CYBERNOID

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **COMMODORE GAMING/HEWSON**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Cybernoid is an odd sort of shooter. Instead of your typical side- or vertical-scrolling stages, you steer your craft—one screen at a time—through mazelike levels. The main strategy comes from deciding when to use your limited special weapons, but your one-hit-wonder ship and cheap enemy placement make this game more frustrating than fun. It's an interesting experiment that doesn't hold up today. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

virtual console

STAGE 5
MAGIC
MAGIC

GOLDEN AXE

PLATFORM: **ARCADE** · PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **ACTION** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1989**

Usually I'm not fond of publishers releasing multiple versions of a single game on Virtual Console, but I'll make an exception for Golden Axe since it's so darn good. Though this edition doesn't have the extra levels of the Genesis version (which has been on Virtual Console for years), the co-op hack-and-slash action has a meaty feel that's unrivaled, and the fantasy setting, magic spells, and rideable beasts are good stuff. And the way the enemies turn to stone? That's just plain cool. Now we need Golden Axe: The Revenge of Death Adder. You hear me, Sega? —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

FAMILY PLAYTIME

ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES Sudoku Edition
Unlimited puzzles!
9 x 9 Grids
8 x 8 Grids
6 x 6 Grids
4 x 4 Grids
Sudoku Solver
Difficulty Levels
Great 2 Player Modes

SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD
101 GAMES
FreeCell • Klondike • Golf
Pyramid • Yukon • Spider
...and 95 more games!
CAN YOU MASTER THEM ALL? TELEGAMES

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
HEARTS • SPADES
CANASTA • CRIBBAGE
EUCHRE • GIN RUMMY
GO FISH • CRAZY EIGHTS
BRIDGE • POKER • BLACKJACK
15 SOLITAIRE GAMES
5 VIDEO POKER VERSIONS

ULTIMATE BRAIN GAMES
CHESS
CHECKERS
MAHJONG
BACKGAMMON
DOMINOES
SINK THE SHIPS
FOUR-IN-A-ROW
REVERSI
FACE CREATOR

ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES
1001 PUZZLES!
CROSSWORDS
KRISS-KROSS
NUMBER JIG
WORDSEARCH
BACKWORDS
CODEBREAKERS
CRYPTICS
and MANY MORE!

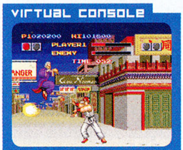
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

AVAILABLE AT
BEST BUY · GameStop · amazon.com · TOYS R US

TELEGAMES®
Web site: www.telegames.com

EVALUATION STATION

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



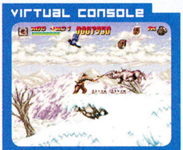
FIGHTING STREET

PLATFORM: **TURBOGRAFX CD**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM/NEC**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1989**

Fighting Street is the TurboGrafx name for the original Street Fighter. It's the fighting game that birthed an empire, but you'd never guess it from the way it plays. Though faithful to its arcade roots, the game is a mess of unresponsive controls, impossible-to-execute special moves, cheap enemy AI, and unintentionally hilarious digitized voices. Despite the title's place in gaming history, it's pretty darn close to unplayable. **—CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



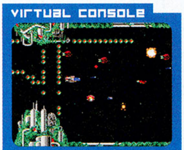
INDIANA JONES' GREATEST ADVENTURES

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS/JVC**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Though not as satisfying as the Super Star Wars games, Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures is nonetheless a fine 2-D approximation of the *Indiana Jones* movie trilogy. There aren't any special gameplay hooks or archaeological puzzles to solve, just solid action and platforming set in the films' locales. Due to a lack of standout features, it only barely makes the Recommended list. **—CHRIS H.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



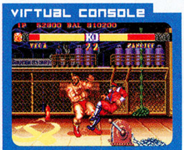
R-TYPE

PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Shooter fans know that R-Type is a classic. It's notoriously tough, it has great power-ups, and you fight against some of the most memorable bosses in the genre. This Master System port is pretty impressive, too. It looks surprisingly good considering its 8-bit limitations, and it sports a bonus level. However, for only 300 Wii Points more, you can get the vastly superior TurboGrafx16 version, rendering this one mostly pointless. **—PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



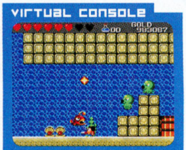
STREET FIGHTER II: CHAMPION EDITION

PLATFORM: **TURBOGRAFX16**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM/NEC**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

Do we really need another version of Street Fighter II on Virtual Console? The game is great, but with Street Fighter II Turbo and Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition (which are essentially enhanced versions of this title) already available, your SFII needs have probably been met by now—unless you've been dying to play the game with Japanese character names and text. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



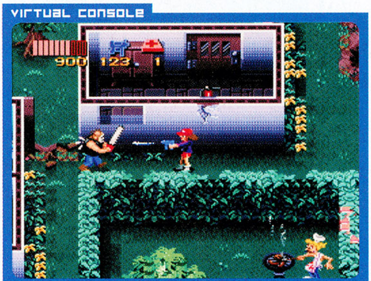
WONDER BOY III: THE DRAGON'S TRAP

PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1989**

With a Metroidesque combination of platforming action and a world full of secrets, Wonder Boy III was one of the Master System's best. The game is still quite compelling; I love how transforming into a new monster doesn't merely allow you to enter new areas, but also shakes up your strategies. This is, however, essentially the same game as Dragon's Curse, also available on Virtual Console. **—CASEY L.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS

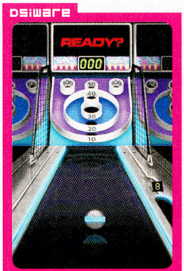
PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** · PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS/KONAMI**
GENRE: **ACTION** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Phil T's Pick

Zombies Ate My Neighbors is a loving homage to cheesy B-horror movies, and its blend of solid gameplay and goofy humor make it one of the more memorable titles of the 16-bit era. Exploring the varied, mazelike levels while searching for victims and killing monsters with weed whackers and water-gun Uzis is great fun, and it becomes fairly challenging in later stages. The game becomes even more enjoyable with a second player.

Recommended

DSIWARE



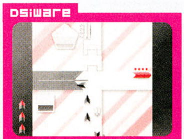
ARCADE BOWLING

PUBLISHER: **SKYWORKS INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **ARCADE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Unless you're a die-hard skee-ball fan, don't bother with Arcade Bowling. Yes, the basic mechanics work pretty well: you flick the ball down the lane with the stylus in order to rack up points. Sadly, that's all the game has to offer. **—JUSTIN C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSIWARE



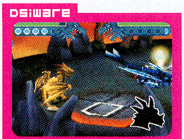
ART SYTLE: DIGIDRIVE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Though perhaps not as intuitive as some of the other Art Style games (and also from a different developer), Digidrive is nonetheless a fairly addictive puzzler. Guiding cars of the same color into lanes to accumulate fuel is pretty simple, but learning how to chain together fuel boosts has considerable depth. Since you don't know what cars are coming next, though, it limits how much you can really strategize. **—CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



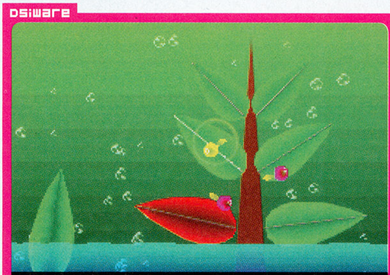
BATTLE OF GIANTS: DRAGONS—BRONZE EDITION

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

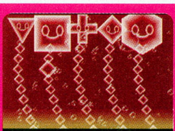
As you would expect, this title is all about dragons battling each other: you create and customize your own dragon and duke it out with other beasties. The actual battles are one-on-one duels in which you gesture with your stylus to perform offensive and defensive maneuvers. Unfortunately, these contests can become very repetitive. **—JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

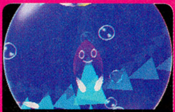
DSiWare



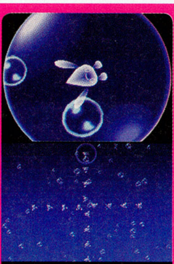
ELECTROPLANKTON HANENBOW



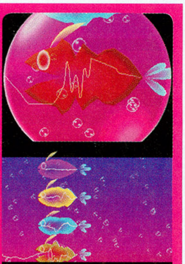
ELECTROPLANKTON BEATNES



ELECTROPLANKTON TRAPY



ELECTROPLANKTON NANOCARP



ELECTROPLANKTON REC-REC

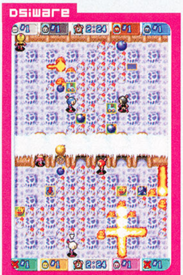
ELECTROPLANKTON

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** · GENRE: **RHYTHM** · NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200 EACH**

More a musical toy than a game, Electroplankton was first released on the Nintendo DS in 2006. In the US, it was sold only at the Nintendo World store in New York City and through select online retailers. This limited availability has made the game somewhat valuable today, so having the individual "instruments" (each a species of the titular organisms) available on DSiWare for only 200 Nintendo DSi Points each is a considerable bargain. The Beatnes species allows you to remix some classic 8-bit Nintendo music and sound effects with just a few taps of your stylus. The nostalgia makes the catchy results even more enjoyable. Hanenbow is the most visually appealing of the lot. It's fun, too—creating music by adjusting the angle of leaves to bounce launched plankton off of is simple, but there's a lot of musical depth to it as well. The concept behind Nanocarp, which has you bouncing sound waves off of different formations of plankton, is clever but the result is mostly musical noise. The DS's microphone is put to good use in Rec-Rec. Here you can record up to four looping samples that play over a selection of prerecorded background beats. Making great tunes is a breeze, and the personalized sounds add a lot. Finally, there's Trapy, where you draw lines for six Electroplankton to follow. The aquatic critters generate noise as they follow your path, and the notes vary depending on how the line is drawn. Like with Nanocarp, the result is usually a cacophony, but Trapy is simply more fun to play with. It's a shame that none of the games let you save your creations, but as pick-up-and-play time-wasters, these microscopic musicians rock. **—PHIL T.**

ELECTROPLANKTON BEATNES	ELECTROPLANKTON HANENBOW	ELECTROPLANKTON NANOCARP	ELECTROPLANKTON REC-REC	ELECTROPLANKTON TRAPY
Recommended	Recommended	Grumble Grumble	Recommended	Hmmm...

DSiWare



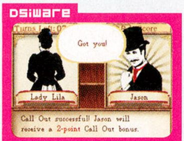
BOMBERMAN BLITZ

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

This is Bomberman's multiplayer battle mode, allowing you to fight against CPU opponents or other humans. There's no DS Download Play, but it does have online support. It may lack some features of a full game, but for the price it's a good deal. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWare



Call Out successful! Jason will receive a 2-point Call Out bonus.

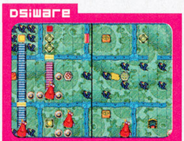
PICTUREBOOK GAMES: THE ROYAL BLUFF

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

The word *PictureBook* in this game's title might imply that this is a kids' game, but that isn't the case. Instead, it's a logic-based board game that relies on conning your opponent to place yourself in a better scoring position. The rules are simple to learn, but the multiple ways to bluff ensure that you'll be concocting new strategies for ages. It's a clever thinking-man's game. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWare



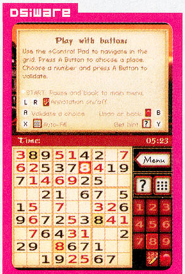
ROBOT RESCUE

PUBLISHER: **TEYON**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

This game costs only a puny 200 Nintendo DSi Points? It's not the greatest title ever or anything, but this puzzle game—in which you control multiple robots simultaneously through mazes—packs in a lot of content; the numerous obstacles (conveyor belts, mines, teleporters, and more) you must overcome provide plenty of depth. I don't get why you have to play with the system turned sideways, though; it would work fine with a standard presentation. **—CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWare



Play with buttons

Use the +Control Pad to navigate in the grid. Press A Button to choose a place. Choose a number and press A Button to validate.

START: Pause and back to main menu.
L R Annotation on/off
A Validate a choice
Undo or back B
X Auto-Fill
Get hint Y

Time: 05:23

3	8	9	5	1	4	2		7
6	2	5	3	7	8	4	1	9
7	1	4	6	9	2	5		
		2	1		6	7		5
1	5		7			3	2	6
9	6	7	2	5	3	8	4	1
	7	6	4	3	1			2
2	9		8	6	7	1		
		1	9	2	5	6	7	

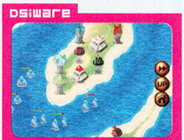
SUDOKU

PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

There's already a perfectly good sudoku game on DSiWare (Sudoku Master), but EA's version is solid, especially for the price. Though the structure is lacking, the interface is great, and there's virtually an infinite number of puzzles (you can even make your own). **—CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWare



VIKING INVASION

PUBLISHER: **BIP MEDIA**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Tower-defense games aren't exactly in short supply these days, and Viking Invasion does little to stand out from the crowd. It's certainly a competent representation of the genre, but all of the units and upgrades are pretty run-of-the-mill, and the game's attempts at humor consistently fall flat. Plus, as a person of Scandinavian heritage, I must sternly condemn the game's portrayal of Vikings as inept, bumbling idiots. **—STEVE T.**

Hmmm...

THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

CALLING PG. 35
CITY BUILDER PG. 37
CRIME SCENE PG. 37
DECA SPORTS DS PG. 33
DEMENTIUM II PG. 34
FAST FOOD PANIC PG. 32
FRAGILE DREAMS: FAREWELL RUINS OF THE MOON PG. 36
GLORY OF HERACLES PG. 30
MONSTER HUNTER TRI PG. 32
RAGNAROK DS PG. 33
SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING PG. 31

Greek Squad

>GLORY OF HERACLES

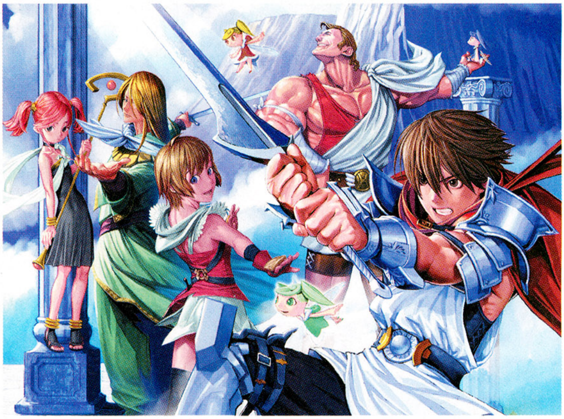
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **PAON** • RELEASE: **JANUARY 2010**

When it comes to role-playing games, no platform has been more prolific than Nintendo's dual-screened handheld. That trend will continue full-speed ahead into 2010 with the January release of Glory of Heracles. Offering a unique interpretation of Greek mythology, this is the fifth installment of a long-running series in Japan, though it will be the first to make the journey to our side of the Pacific. North American gamers are likely more familiar with developer Paon's work on a trio of off-beat Donkey Kong titles—DK: King of Swing, DK: Jungle Climber, and Donkey Kong Barrel Blast.

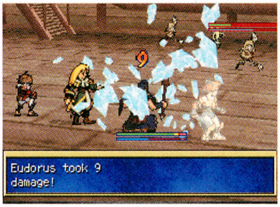
Such unconventional monkey business isn't terribly indicative of what you'll find here—a largely traditional Japanese RPG complete with random battles and silent protagonist—but that's not to say Glory of Heracles is void of new ideas. Combat in particular offers a number of interesting tactical twists. Though the battles are turn-based, they aren't broken down by individual characters as in most RPGs. Instead, you issue commands for everyone in your squad before watching the entire round play out on the top screen. That requires you to plan ahead a bit more and try to anticipate the enemies' actions since you won't have a chance to respond until every combatant has taken its turn. This structure also means that you'll occasionally end up with a party member attacking foes that are already dead. Fortunately, such occurrences actually have a strategic benefit; these Overkills are the only way to replenish a character's magic points during battle (adding another layer of tactical depth). Speaking of magic, you have the option to increase its potency by completing a little touch-screen microgame whenever you cast a spell. These boosts might involve quickly tapping Roman numerals in order or dragging numbered circles to their corresponding furnaces. Nothing mind-blowing, but they add a nice active element to the skirmishes.

The game's presentation is pretty solid, as well, including anime-style cut-scenes, lots of fancy spell effects, and what looks to be an entertaining script. Longtime Nintendo fans will especially appreciate the inside jokes sprinkled throughout. Our favorite example: when the main hero is in need of an alias, one of his compatriots suggests Pit, to which another replies, "Pit? That doesn't even sound Greek!"

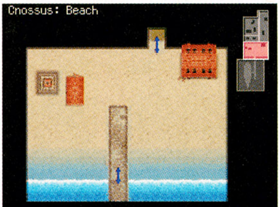
—STEVE T.



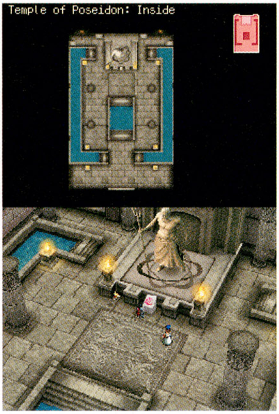
[Above] If you guessed that the muscle-bound dude in the toga is Heracles, you'd be wrong. Don't judge a book by its cover! Our hero is actually the guy rocking the red scarf.



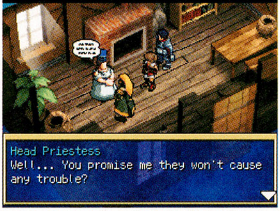
Eudorus took 9
damage!



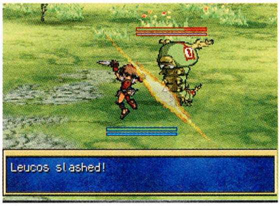
Cnossus: Beach



Temple of Poseidon: Inside



Head Priestess
Well... You promise me they won't cause any trouble?



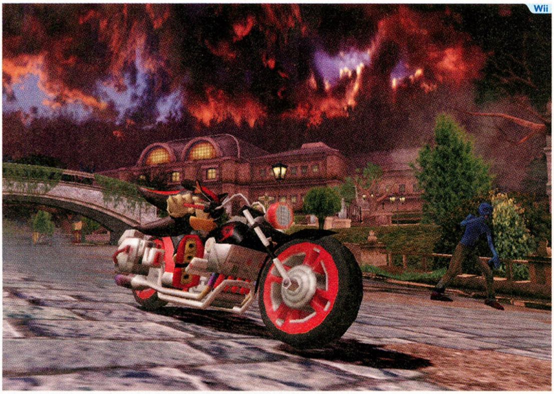
Leucos slashed!

Sonic Vroom

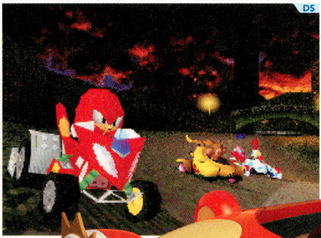
>SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING

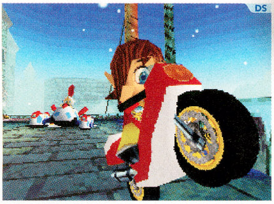
PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2010**

Everyone knows that Sonic the Hedgehog is the fastest video game character on two legs, but what about on four wheels? You'll get to find out when Sonic and his friends—as well as characters from a plethora of other Sega franchises—hit the road for some kart-style craziness in Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing. Developed by the same folks who made Sega Superstars Tennis, this racing game is an explosion of Sega goodness, with levels and characters from Sega franchises such as Super Monkey Ball, Samba de Amigo, Shenmue, Alex Kidd, Jet Set Radio, The House of the Dead, Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg, Space Channel 5, and more. The crazy courses feature interactive elements from the games upon which they're based, and the action gets even wilder thanks to the inclusion of speed boosts and other items. The most impressive pickup is the All-Star power-up; it grants a different ability depending on which character you're playing, but it's always guaranteed to send opponents flying out of your way as you roar past. Both Wii and DS owners will be able to start revving up their engines in early 2010. **—CHRIS H.**

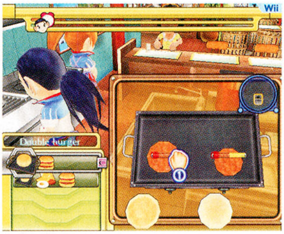


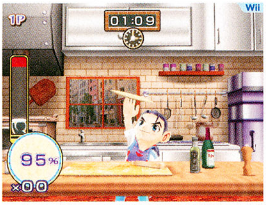
[Above] The dark, stormy sky is obviously a manifestation of Shadow the Hedgehog's inner angst.

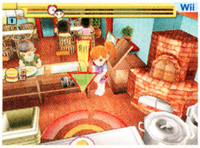




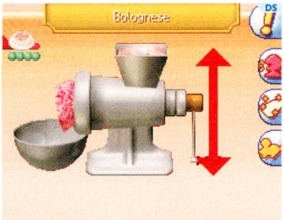
Without a series to call his own, Alex Kidd rides the highways and dreams of the old days.

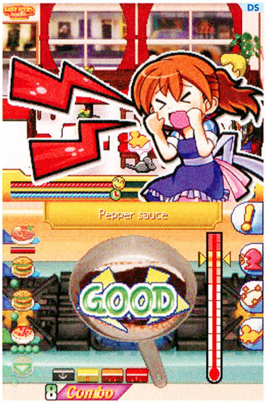






[Left] Don't just stand around when there's so much work to be done!





A Full Plate

> FAST FOOD PANIC

PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SOUTHPEAK**
DEVELOPER: **NOBILIS** • RELEASE: **JANUARY 2010**

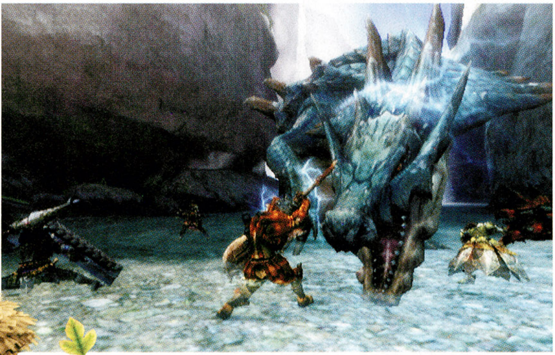
Fast Food Panic is more than just cooking-themed minigames. That's a big part of it, of course; you'll chop ingredients, pour sauce, pick condiments, form rice balls, and more as you prepare an assortment of hamburgers, pizza, curry, sushi, crepes, and pasta. But you'll also have to greet customers, put away dishes, clean tables, help at the register, and chase away vermin—and you'll pretty much be doing it while cooking up to four different dishes simultaneously. On top of that, you'll be racing the clock to fill up your customer-satisfaction meter before time runs out. Both the Wii console and Nintendo DS handheld versions of the game offer 15 stages and three difficulty settings, as well as minigames that take advantage of their respective systems' interfaces, but only the Wii version serves up multiplayer kitchen chaos. Two players can divide the labor in co-op mode, and up to four players (depending on the minigame) can partake in 10 versus activities, including an ice-cream-serving competition and a steak-eating contest. **—CHRIS H.**

Tri or Die

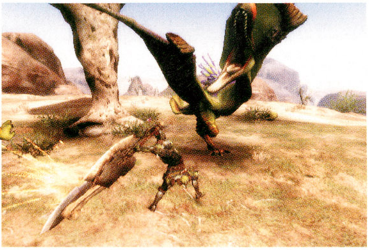
> MONSTER HUNTER TRI

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2010**

If you caught last issue's feature on Monster Hunter Tri, you know that a big part of the game's appeal is the ability to grab some friends, go online, and team up to defeat giant, dinosaurlike monsters. All manner of weapons are at your disposal—from a sword and shield to a bowgun—and you'll have an almost infinite number of character-customization options thanks to the ability to craft your own armor. But in addition to co-op play, there's a strong emphasis on the single-player experience—a first for the Monster Hunter series. In single-player mode you're tasked by Moga Village to find out what's been causing a series of strange earthquakes, and to do so you'll team up with a diminutive, masked, AI-controlled partner named Cha-Cha. Not only can Cha-Cha help you by fighting at your side (you can change his behavior patterns by changing his mask), but he can also learn various dances that have a range of beneficial effects, such as healing your hero. And with so many big, bad monsters to fight, you'll need all the help you can get. **—CHRIS H.**



Cha-Cha may look weird, but his dancing comes in handy.



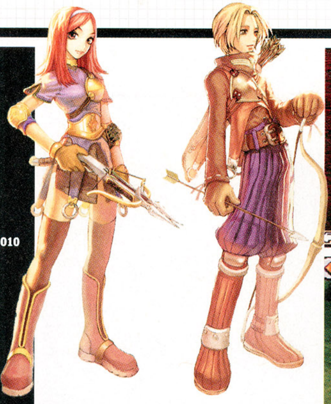
Not The End of the World

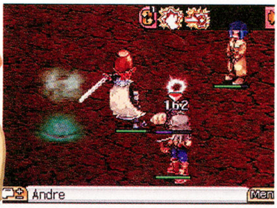
> RAGNAROK DS

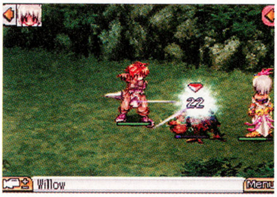
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **GUNGHO WORKS** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2010**

Ragnarok for the Nintendo DS is not Ragnarok Online. It has the same colorful graphics as the popular Korean MMORPG, the same cutesy little pink blob-monsters, and it plays more like Ragnarok Online than you might expect, but it has no online component. This has its ups and its downs. There's none of the cooperation and camaraderie of a multiplayer game, but there also are no obnoxious teenagers typing "KEKEKE" at you.

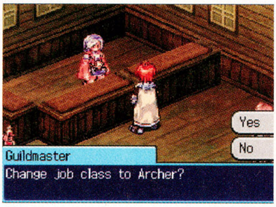
Although it's not quite a full-blown action game, Ragnarok doesn't have a distinct battle mode. Just like an MMORPG, when monsters appear on the field map, you tap them with the stylus to start sending attacks their way. More-complex stylus motions trigger spells and special moves, which saves on paging through complicated menus; all this adds up to a very fast-moving combat system. If you like an RPG that doesn't waste your precious time, Ragnarok is one to keep an eye on. **—DAVID S.**



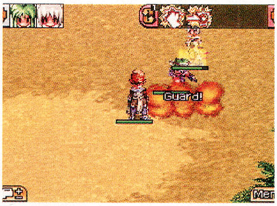


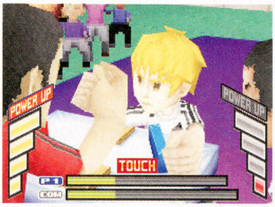


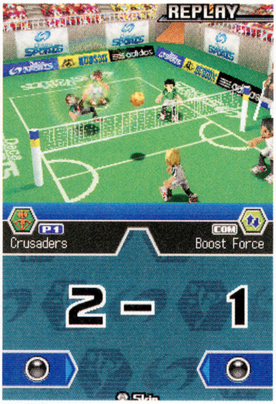
By visiting guilds, you can became an archer or one of several other character classes.

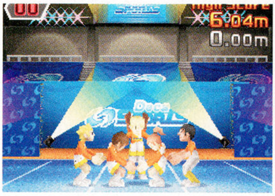


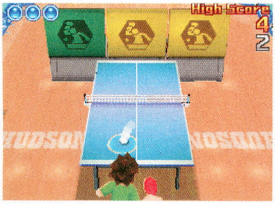
Guildmaster
Change job class to Archer?

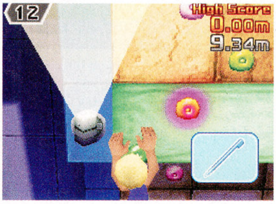










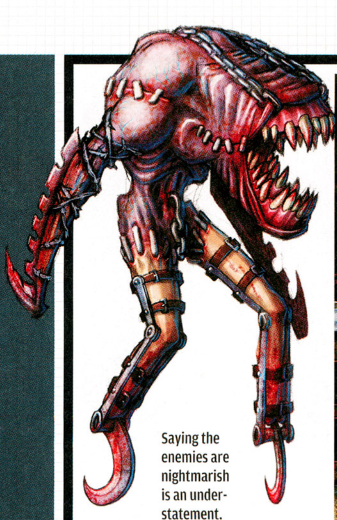


Shuffled Deca

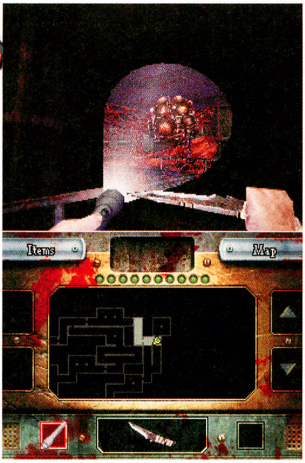
> DECA SPORTS DS

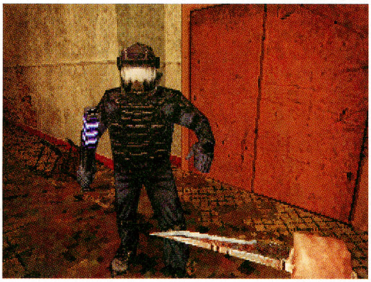
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2010**

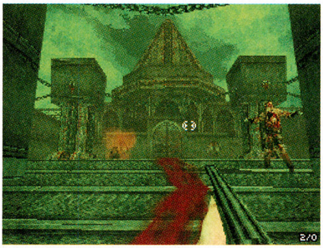
Hudson's Deca Sports titles are already a big hit on Wii—the original game, released in 2008, has sold more than a million copies in North America alone—and now the series is getting set to make a handheld splash with the release of Deca Sports DS. As its title implies, the game features 10 sporting events across a wide variety of activities—arm wrestling, golf, bobsled, clay-pigeon shooting, ping-pong, rugby, wall climbing, skydiving, cheerleading, and sepak takraw (a Malaysian game that's sort of like a combination of volleyball and kickball). Naturally, each event takes advantage of the touch screen and/or buttons in different ways; in arm wrestling you rub the screen to build up momentum, then tap it when your power bar is higher than your opponent's, while in wall climbing you watch where the handholds are on the upper screen and tap either the left or right side of the touch screen to move your athlete's corresponding hand. Numerous teams and multiple modes, including tournament play, are also on offer. **—CHRIS H.**

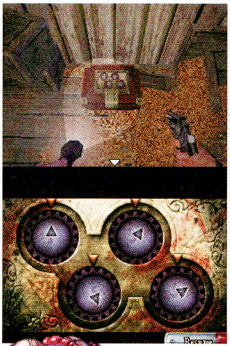


Saying the enemies are nightmarish is an understatement.

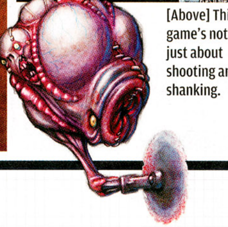








[Above] This game's not just about shooting and shanking.



Where Is My Mind?

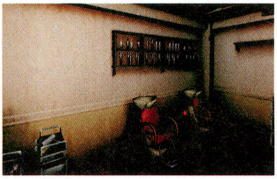
>DEMENTIUM II

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SOUTHPEAK**
DEVELOPER: **RENEGADE KID** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2010**

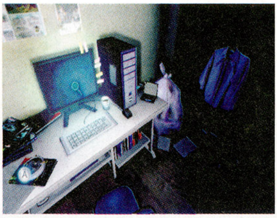
Dementium II is all about improvements. 2007's M-rated Dementium: The Ward was an impressive, scary first-person adventure game that had great controls and atmosphere. But it had its share of problems, too. Enemies constantly respawned, for example, making backtracking a pain. That—combined with the poor save system, the annoying map, and being restricted to equipping only one item at a time (so you can hold either your flashlight or your weapon)—made the game much more difficult than it should have been. Thankfully, the sequel addresses all of these concerns while continuing the story of series protagonist William Redmoor.

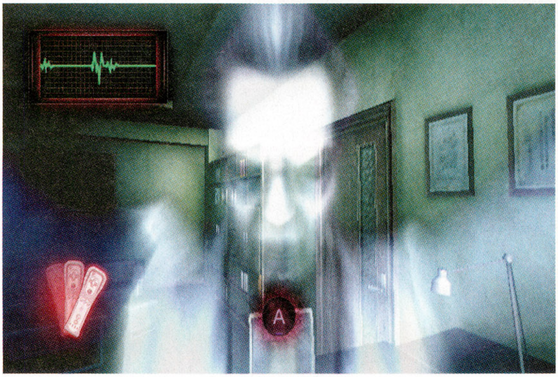
When Dementium II begins, five weeks have passed since the events of the original game, and amnesiac William is waking up from brain surgery as he's being dragged back to his cell at the Bright Dawn Treatment Center. It's a dingy place that's more like a prison than a psychiatric hospital—and it gets even worse when the world shifts to a nightmarish realm of metal, chains, and barbed wire in which grotesque monstrosities lurk (the developers clearly drew inspiration from Silent Hill). Fortunately, things don't stay this way permanently; unfortunately, William is still in the facility and has to fight his way out. So the early part of the game focuses on William's escape, dispatching human guards as well as twisted monsters with an array of weaponry (the first weapon you come upon is a shank, but you'll acquire other armaments, including a sledgehammer and a shotgun) and finding clues about his past. Working your way through Bright Dawn is easy thanks to the fact that enemies don't respawn, as well as the Castlevania-style map on the bottom screen; it tells you which doors you've been through and which doors you've tried to open but are locked. Every time you pass through a door, the game saves, and there are also manual save points before and after key moments in the game, such as boss fights.

In one of the confrontations we played, William finds himself in a snow-covered village (so either William breaks out of Bright Dawn or this is a flashback). Up to this point, William has received messages from his wife indicating that he has to travel to their daughter's grave, which is located inside a crypt. There, you face a boss called the Wendigo Witch; in order to fight her in this darkened space, it's a good idea to equip your flashlight and a one-handed weapon such as a pistol. As the battle concludes—spoiler alert!—the Wendigo Witch transforms into William's wife, leaving you questioning whether he's actually the hero of this insane adventure after all. **—JUSTIN C.**



[Above] This salon looks calm, but anything could be lurking around the corner....





Can You Fear Me Now?

>CALLING

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2010**

In first-person horror adventure Calling, you're thrust into the shoes of ordinary people who suddenly find themselves trapped in the Mnemonic Abyss—a world that exists between life and death. You'll use the Wii Remote as a flashlight for seeing in the dark, creepy environments (which range from a school to an otaku's bedroom) and to interact with numerous objects, such as doors and drawers. You'll also use it as a cell phone—unsettling calls come in through the remote's speaker—that has the power to teleport you from one location to another. As you explore your surroundings for clues to solve puzzles, ghosts will appear from out of nowhere, threatening to scare you out of your seat; since you can't fight back, your only options are to flee or to ward off the ghost by shaking the controller. You'll take control of four different characters with crisscrossing storylines as you attempt to escape the Mnemonic Abyss and unravel the mysteries that brought you there in the first place. **—CHRIS H.**

Discover a Magical World
with your
ocarina
Enter Our Ocarina Competition
to Win Cash and Prizes!
STL Ocarina
www.stlocarina.com
1-866-487-3814

Lonely Island

> FRAGILE DREAMS: FAREWELL RUINS OF THE MOON

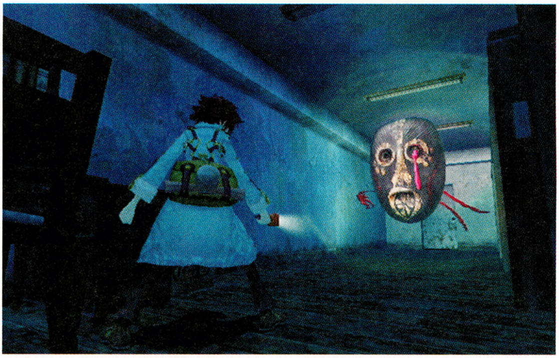
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **TRI-CRESCENDO** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2010**

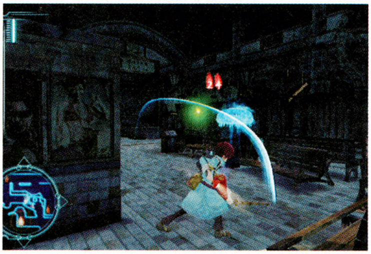
Fifteen-year-old Seto is alone. The grandfatherly old man he was living with at a dilapidated observatory (*everything's* dilapidated in this postapocalyptic Japan) died, and Seto is just waiting around in the dark. And so action-RPG Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon begins with you exploring the empty building. Your first goal: light. After opening the observatory dome's doors to let in the moonlight, you see fireflies swarming around a flashlight. (Fortunately, fireflies congregate around anything you can interact with.) With the flashlight equipped in your right hand, you can aim the beam by pointing the Wii Remote at your TV screen. Fragile Dreams is similar to Silent Hill: Shattered Memories in this respect, but it doesn't seem that Fragile Dreams's main goal is to scare you—though exploring decaying environments in the dark can certainly feel unsettling—but to create a certain mood.

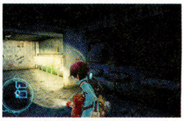
That doesn't mean there aren't genuine threats in the world of Fragile Dreams, such as, early on, a monster that looks like a giant scary face. Luckily, you hold a stick (which is more like a small tree branch) in your left hand, giving you a chance to defend yourself. Combat is simple (perhaps overly so); you press A to swing your weapon, and keep tapping until your opponent is defeated. Once bested, the scary-face enemy runs away (not without mocking you first, however), leaving you free to explore a nearby desk that holds a letter from the old man. This document tells you to head toward a giant red tower to look for other survivors—and so Seto sets off for the fully illuminated Tokyo Tower.

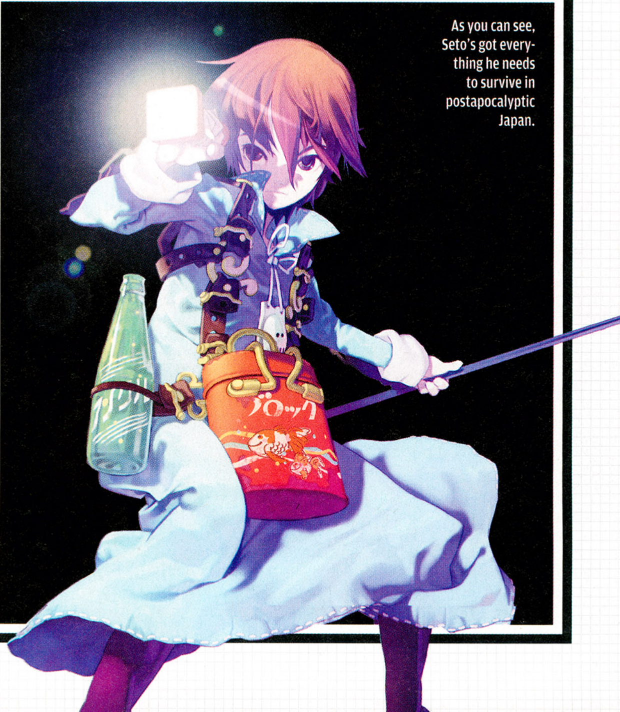
Along the way, you encounter a singing silver-haired girl named Ren. This is the first real human interaction Seto's had in a while, but before he can really talk to her, she flees to the subway station below ground. While trying to follow her, you hear a woman's voice asking for help. After some exploring, you discover that the voice is coming from a mechanical device called a Personal Frame (PF) that's designed to provide tips to its user. With the PF's guidance, you learn that using fire pits keep baddies away (so you can rest and save the game), and you find a new, more powerful weapon—a bamboo sword—in the men's restroom. The PF also tells you that these enemies are known as "malicious thought entities"—all you really need to know is that they're ghostlike beings (many of which resemble jellyfish) and that they can be seen by shining a light on them, which allows you to whack them with your weapons.

This represents only a fraction of what Fragile Dreams has to offer, but we're already sold on the game's postapocalyptic atmosphere. —**JUSTIN C.**









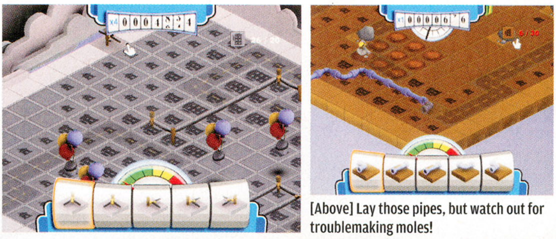
As you can see, Seto's got everything he needs to survive in postapocalyptic Japan.

Under Construction

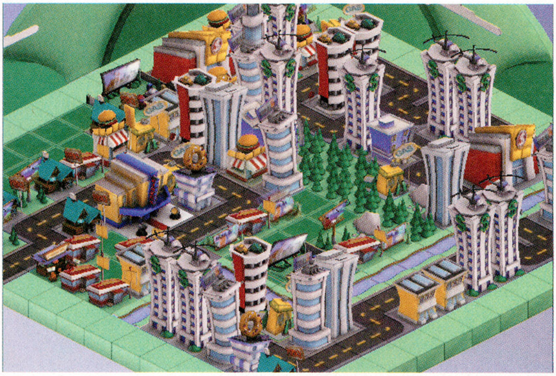
> CITY BUILDER

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **VIRTUAL PLAY**
DEVELOPER: **COLLISION STUDIOS**
RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2010**

If you've ever wanted to create your own virtual city but don't have the patience for a full-blown sim, then City Builder might be the game for you. At the most basic level, City Builder is a puzzle game in which you must place pieces on a grid to get from point A to point B. You'll do so first by using randomly provided curves and straightaways to lay down roads, then head underground to add pipes, and finally go above the city to implement power lines. In each case, it may seem tempting to go for the shortest possible route (especially since you're under a strict time limit), but creating longer paths allows more buildings to pop up, and by overlapping the paths for roads, pipes, and/or electrical lines, you'll upgrade nearby buildings and thereby nab more points. As you progress across five continents, you'll create cities of three types (residential, industrial, and business), and learn to overcome obstacles such as rockpiles, giant moles, and even bigfoot. **—CHRIS H.**



[Above] Lay those pipes, but watch out for troublemaking moles!

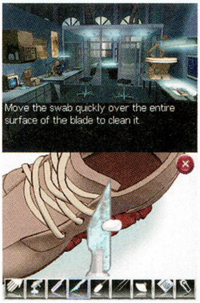


The Evidence Doesn't Lie

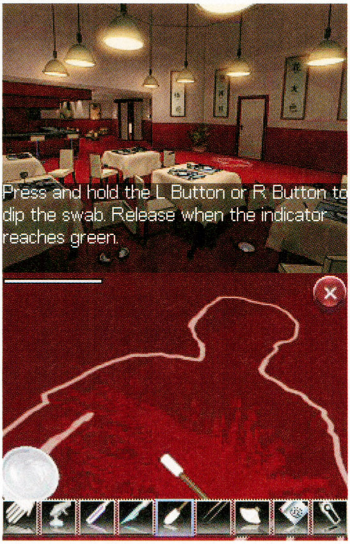
> CRIME SCENE

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SOUTHPEAK**
DEVELOPER: **NOBILIS** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2010**

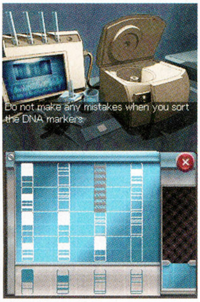
In Crime Scene, you assume the role of rookie forensics detective Matt Simmons, who gathers evidence—relying mostly on his array of *CSI*-like tools—to solve five different cases. While investigating the murder of a detective and his wife, for instance, you have to interview coworkers, dust for fingerprints, and collect bullets and blood samples. These tasks play out in minigames that make use of the dual-screened handheld's unique features. For example, you obtain fingerprints by sprinkling dust about with the stylus, then blowing away any extraneous powder by exhaling into the microphone. Once that's done, you lay tape over the print, then peel it up and add the tape to your inventory, which allows you to take the print back to the lab and find a match in the fingerprint database. It may sound easy, but there is timing and precision involved. If you mess up, your credibility meter depletes; lose all your credibility, and you're kicked off the force. **—JUSTIN C.**



Move the swab quickly over the entire surface of the blade to clean it.



Press and hold the L Button or R Button to dip the swab. Release when the indicator reaches green.



Do not make any mistakes when you sort the DNA markers.

Crime Scene has you taking part in all aspects of forensics, from collecting blood evidence [above] to identifying DNA markers [left].

NINTENDO POWER
250th ISSUE!

25

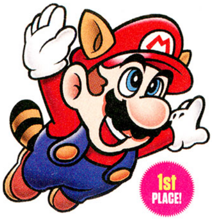
50 REASONS TO LOVE NINTENDO

How should our magazine celebrate its 250th issue? The obvious answer is to look back at old covers and section redesigns, or to reminisce about the days before desktop publishing. But... where's the fun in that? Nintendo Power has always focused on the *games*–the characters, worlds, stories, and experiences that have left us with so many magnificent memories. This is supposed to be a celebration, so let's get the party started. With our eyes on 25 years of gaming history and our hearts full of nostalgic love, we present 250 reasons why we absolutely adore the wonderful world of Nintendo.

START ›

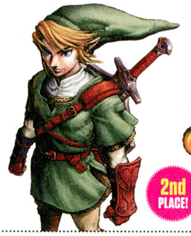
OUR FAVORITE HEROES

After 25 years and Miyamoto-only-knows-how-many games, we've had the pleasure of meeting plenty of pleasant protagonists. Some are particular standouts, and the men, women, monsters, animals—and whatever Kirby is—on these pages are by far the best of the best.



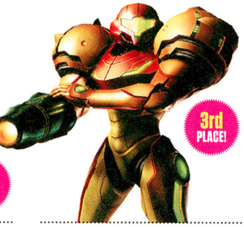
Mario

Is it the 'stache? The classic red cap? His plumbing prowess? The never-ending supply of performance-enhancing mushrooms? Whatever it is, it's kept Mario as gaming's top icon for almost 30 years.



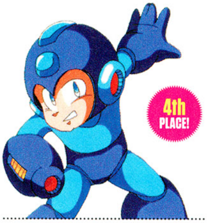
Link

Link may not say much, but his actions speak volumes. Whether he's a child or an adult, left-handed or right-handed, cartoony or realistic, Link's courage always wins out over evil.



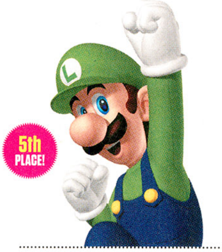
Samus

This girl is impossible to rattle. Alien parasite sucking on her head? No biggie. Base self-destructing? Not a problem. Armor destroyed? A skintight bodysuit will do just fine. If Luigi had Samus's guts, Peach would be baking *him* cakes.



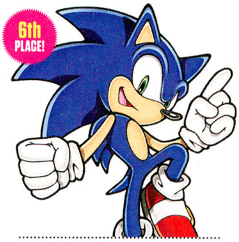
Mega Man

From humble beginnings as a lab-assistance robot, Mega Man has gone on to become a true hero who fights for peace and justice. What makes him especially cool is his ability to use the weapons of his defeated foes.



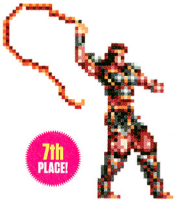
Luigi

Despite more than 20 years of abuse and neglect, Luigi perseveres. Sure, he may not enjoy the fame and adoration of his spotlight-hogging brother, but when the chips are down, you can count on the man in green. Most of the time.



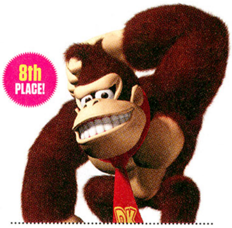
Sonic the Hedgehog

What a long, strange road it's been for the Blue Blur. Once Mario's archnemesis, he now seems most at home on Nintendo's platforms. Through it all, he's remained one of gaming's greatest icons.



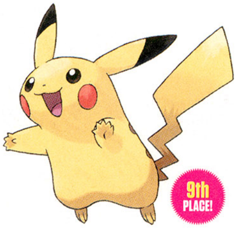
Simon Belmont

We have a lot of respect for all the vampire-hunting heroes of the Castlevania series, but everything started with Simon. Plus, he's the only guy tough enough to hunt Dracula while wearing a leather loincloth.



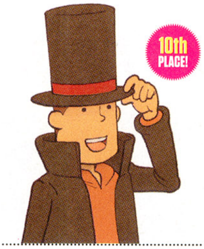
Donkey Kong

The original bongo-beating, barrel-blasting party animal isn't the first guy we'd ask to solve a crisis, but *man*, would we love to hang with this dude.



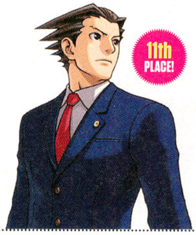
Pikachu

Even though this cute little lightning rod was one of the very first Pokémon, it's still got it after all these years. We'll always choose you, Pikachu!



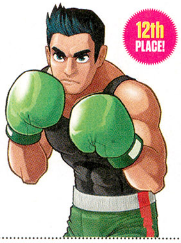
Professor Layton

Lots of heroes use their fists, but very few use their brains. Stay in school, kids, and you can be as cool as Professor Layton, too.



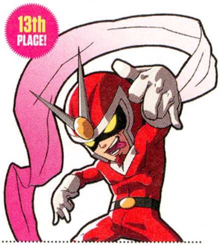
Phoenix Wright

Lawyers get a bad rap, but Phoenix is a defender of the innocent who can think his way out of any situation, no matter how dire. He's also the best dresser on this list.



Little Mac

Little Mac taught us that even the biggest foes could be bested with a combination of patience, persistence, and pattern recognition.



Viewtiful Joe

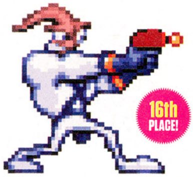
What's not to love about Viewtiful Joe? This goofball-turned-superhero has inimitable style, pilots a giant mech, and gave us one of gaming's most memorable catchphrases. Henshin-a-go-go, baby!

Leon S. Kennedy

Proof that a zombie apocalypse will put hair on your chest, Leon started as a glorified meter maid with a bad haircut, and by Resident Evil 4, he was suplexing fools and jumping out of second-story windows.

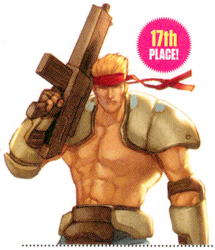
Travis Touchdown

An unabashed *otaku* and pro-wrestling fan, Travis always stays true to himself. He's kind of like us, except we aren't lewd, beam katana-wielding assassins.



Earthworm Jim

His blatant disregard for bovine safety notwithstanding, Earthworm Jim is a role model to invertebrates everywhere. He's chivalrous, he's willing to use his own head as a whip, and he stands up to such nefarious evildoers as Major Mucus and Bob the Killer Goldfish.

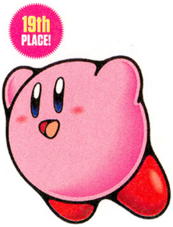


Bill Rizer

Bill Rizer is a one-man army (or at least one-half of a two-man army) who has saved the Earth from aliens more times than he can count. Most importantly, he's done it without a shirt.

Fox McCloud

Although he hasn't always been in the best games, Fox McCloud should be recognized for saving entire *planetary systems*, which many other heroes have yet to do.



Kirby

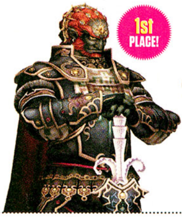
Kirby doesn't get the respect he deserves. Sure, he's cuddly and pink, but he can eat you and take your powers, too. (That's actually pretty darn scary when we think about it.)

Captain Falcon

Not only is Falcon an F-Zero racer, a bounty hunter, and master of the "Falcon Puuuuunch," but he's also kind of a jerk (witness his Pikmin massacre in Super Smash Bros. Brawl), and we like that about him.

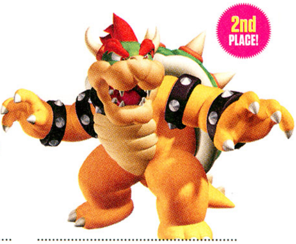
OUR FAVORITE VILLIANS

It's hard to have an amazing hero without a proportionately vile villain, and the following bad guys do a great job of making our champions look good. Whether their aim is to dominate the world, to bully woodland creatures, or to get a girlfriend, these nefarious ne'er-do-wells do whatever it takes to reach their goal...and then fail spectacularly.



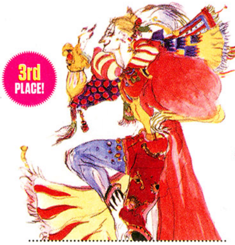
Ganon

Gaming's most legendary villain has taken many forms over the years, but he's always a powerful, intimidating presence (even when he transforms into a giant pig). When you go into battle against Ganon, you know you're in for something truly epic.



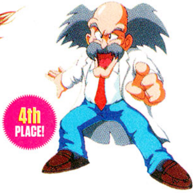
Bowser

We've got a soft spot for the Koopa King, but let's be honest: he stinks at being a bad guy. Not only is he regularly pummeled by plumbers, but these days he spends half his time helping them out!



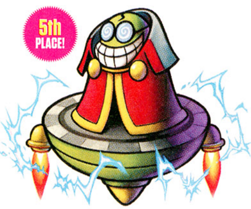
Kefka Palazzo

An insane, remorseless clown with godlike powers who wants to destroy everyone and everything (and comes frighteningly close to achieving his goal), Kefka is downright *evil.*



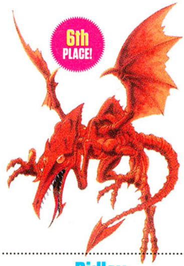
Dr. Wily

Dr. Wily is a naughty, jealous man, but you've got to admire his persistence and mad genius. It seems like the guy can make maniacal robots based on anything (Centaur Man? Seriously?), and his crazy contraptions don't go down easily.



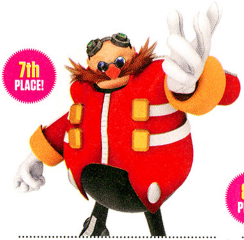
Fawful

The Mario bros. may be the bread that makes the sandwich of the Mario & Luigi series, but Fawful is the delicious mustard on that bread.



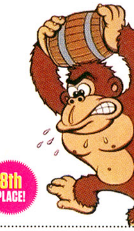
Ridley

Not only is Ridley responsible for the deaths of Samus's parents, but the dragonlike Space Pirate also keeps coming back no matter how many times Samus defeats him.



Dr. Robotnik

Anyone who turns adorable woodland creatures into murderous robots is grade-A villain material—though you can hardly blame Robotnik when so-called heroes make fun of his body shape by calling him "Eggman."

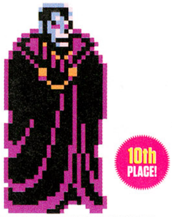


Donkey Kong

If he isn't wearing a tie, do not approach Donkey Kong. He's a hero *now,* but back in the old days he was an ornery ape with a rap sheet that included kidnapping and wanton barrel destruction.

Albert Wesker

If you're going to be a first-rate heel, you may as well look good doing it. Resident Evil's leading antagonist is definitely the most stylin' person on this list. And that's despite the fact that he's technically undead!

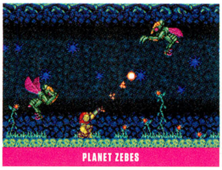


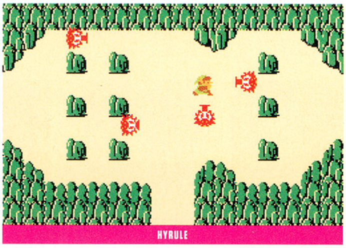
Dracula

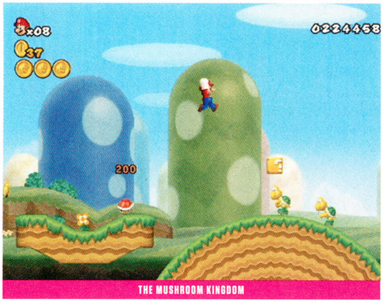
You can't go wrong with a classic like the blood-sucking, shape-shifting prince of darkness, Count Dracula. The citizens of Transylvania might not like the fact that he keeps coming back to life, but gamers wouldn't want it any other way.

KEFKA PALAZZO ILLUSTRATION: © 1994 YOSHITAKA AMANO

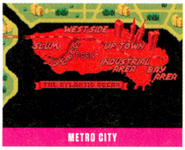
REASONS 031 TO 035


PLANET ZEBES

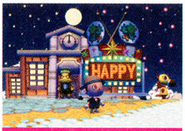

HYRULE



THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM



METRO CITY



YOUR TOWN

WONDERFUL WORLDS

THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM (MARIO SERIES) It may have a pesky turtle infestation and government officials may get kidnapped on a regular basis, but the Mushroom Kingdom is still an amazing place. With landscapes as varied as grassy plains, deserts, oceans, arctic regions, and more, there's an environment to suit all tastes. And hey, touching some of the local plant life gives you super powers. How cool is that?

HYRULE (THE LEGEND OF ZELDA SERIES) The land of Hyrule is vast and occasionally dangerous, but there are always new places to explore and new wonders to discover. Who can forget their first adventure through the Lost Woods or Death Mountain? When visiting, bring plenty of rupees, and be sure to check out one of its many labyrinthine dungeons.

PLANET ZEBES (METROID SERIES) Even though Zebes was destroyed in Super Metroid, we remember the planet for its dark and brooding atmosphere. Only an intergalactic bounty hunter could feel comfortable in a world full of treacherous terrain and hostile alien inhabitants. It may be a scary place, but we love spending time there.

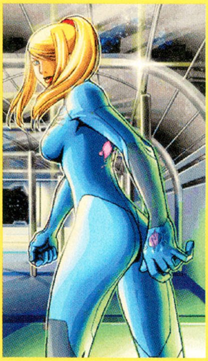
YOUR TOWN (ANIMAL CROSSING SERIES) There are very few video game worlds in which we would actually want to live. Even the nicer locales are usually full of things that want to kill you. Not in Animal Crossing, though. Here, the only things you need to worry about are chatty neighbors and a raccoon loan shark.

METRO CITY (FINAL FIGHT SERIES) Fed up with your local government? Is your city run by ineffective politicians who are afraid to make any real changes? Then maybe it's time to move to Metro City. Sure, the crime rate is high, but Mayor Mike Haggar isn't afraid to remove his shirt, take to the streets, and bust up gangs with his bare hands.

REASON 036

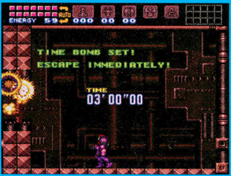
Future Fashion

Samus may call her underarmor outfit the Zero Suit, but we give it a 10. Maybe the name comes from the fact that it leaves zero to the imagination?



REASONS 037 TO 039

THREE METROID ESCAPE MINUTES



TIME BOMB SET!
ESCAPE IMMEDIATELY!
TIME
03' 00"00

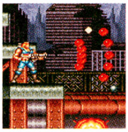
Because blowing up a base *after* you've left it is for wimps.

REASON 040

ROBOTIC OPERATING BUDDY

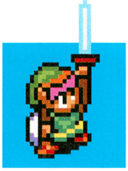
Judged strictly on its merits as a peripheral, R.O.B. is hardly worth celebrating. The thing was noisy, slow, and difficult to assemble, plus only two games ever took advantage of it (and neither was very good). But our Robotic Operating Buddy helped save video games. When Nintendo was preparing to introduce the NES in 1985, the market had just crashed and most retailers were refusing to devote shelf space to video games. So the company made the brilliant decision to package R.O.B. with every console and pitch the NES as a toy. The strategy worked and the rest is history. Thanks R.O.B.!

AWESOME WEAPONS & POWER-UPS



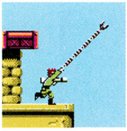
SPREAD GUN (CONTRA SERIES)

The Contra games are full of kick-butt weapons, but there's no question that the all-around best is the spread gun. You can't go wrong with quintuple the firepower!



MASTER SWORD (THE LEGEND OF ZELDA SERIES)

The Master Sword isn't just a powerful sword. It's the blade that evil itself fears, and an integral part of many of Link's adventures.

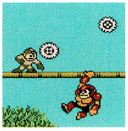


BIONIC ARM (BIONIC COMMANDO)

Technically the Bionic Arm might not be a weapon since it doesn't destroy enemies, but using it to swing and climb is just plain cool. It's one of the all-time greatest gameplay mechanics.

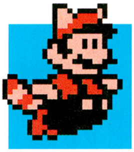
MEGA MUSHROOM (NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.)

The regular Super Mushroom is a pretty sweet power-up, but it pales in comparison to the Mega Mushroom, which lets Mario grow to screen-filling size and smash everything in his path.



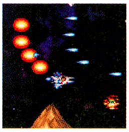
METAL BLADE (MEGA MAN 2)

Some people may call the multidirectional Metal Blade cheap, but it sure is effective (and energy-efficient). It slices through enemies like they were butter—including, ironically, its owner, Metal Man.



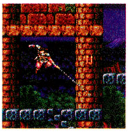
RACCOON SUIT (SUPER MARIO BROS. 3)

One of the most iconic power-ups in the Mario series, the Raccoon Suit lets Mario soar through the skies and knock enemies silly with a swipe of his tail.



OPTIONS (GRADIUS SERIES)

To be honest, we've never understood why the pods that follow your ship's movements and add extra firepower in Gradius are called options, but they're indispensable nonetheless.

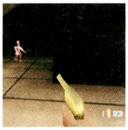


VAMPIRE KILLER (SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV)

Castlevania's trademark Vampire Killer whip got even better in Super Castlevania IV—you could attack with the weapon in eight directions, and use it like a shield or a grappling hook.

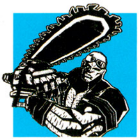
SMASH BALL (SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL)

The fight to get the Smash Ball in Super Smash Bros. Brawl is often nearly as fierce as the awesome Final Smash attack that it allows you to unleash on your opponents.



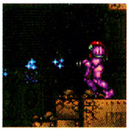
GOLDEN GUN (GOLDENEYE 007)

Every shot from the legendary Golden Gun is a one-hit kill. You can't ask for more than that.



CHAINSAW (MADWORLD)

When an enemy absolutely, positively has to be defeated in the most brutal, Mature-rated way possible, you've gotta go with Jack's chainsaw.

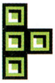


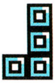
ICE BEAM (METROID SERIES)

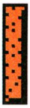
Samus Aran always gets a cool assortment of weapons and gear, but the coolest might be the Ice Beam. Get it? Coolest? Ha! "Chill out, Space Pirate scum!"

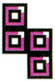
MARIO'S BUTT (MARIO SERIES)

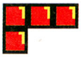
If you're gonna eat too much pasta, you might as well put those extra pounds to use with a devastating butt attack.

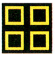


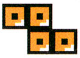






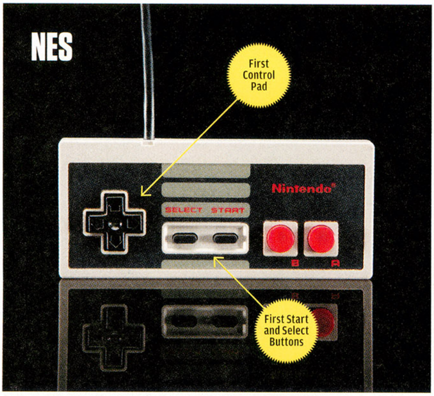


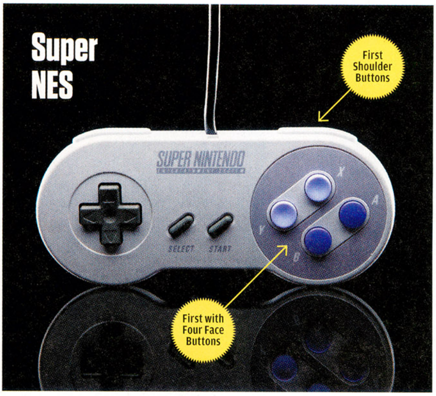


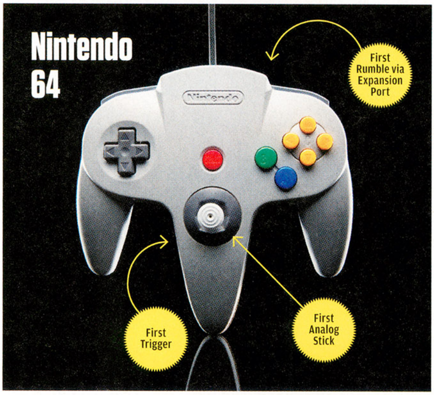


SEVEN TETRIS SHAPES

It's amazing that seven simple shapes, made of four squares each, can add up to what's arguably the world's most addictive game.


NES
First Control Pad
First Start and Select Buttons

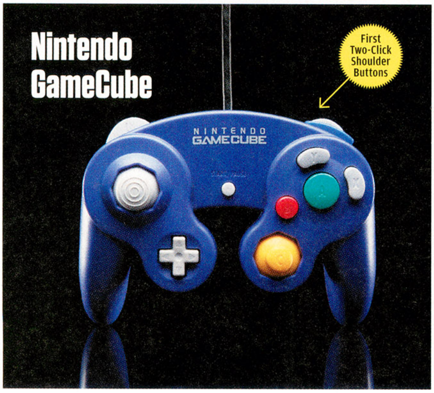

Super NES
First Shoulder Buttons
First with Four Face Buttons

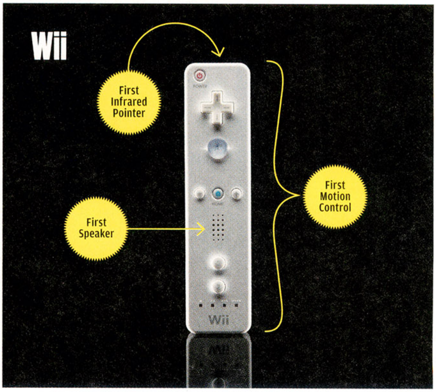

Nintendo 64
First Rumble via Expansion Port
First Trigger
First Analog Stick

INNOVATIVE CONTROLLERS

REASONS 061 TO 065

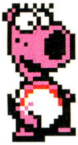
Players wrestled with big, hand-cramping joysticks before the NES brought the Control Pad to console gaming, and Nintendo has been redefining the way games are played ever since. From shoulder buttons to rumble to motion control, Nintendo has perfected and popularized most of the features that appear on today's controllers. Take a look at the many innovations on this page and just imagine the staggering number of amazing experiences we would've missed out on without them. Makes you glad that Nintendo expanded beyond the playing-card business, doesn't it?


Nintendo GameCube
First Two-Click Shoulder Buttons


Wii
First Infrared Pointer
First Speaker
First Motion Control

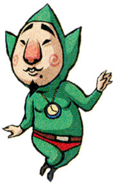
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK MADEO

Weirdos



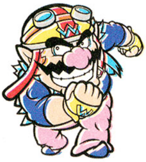
Birdo

At once a male cross-dresser and a female love interest for Yoshi, Birdo is an enigma, and determining his/her gender is one of life's biggest questions. Then there's the fact that Birdo shoots eggs out of his/her mouth...hole...thing.



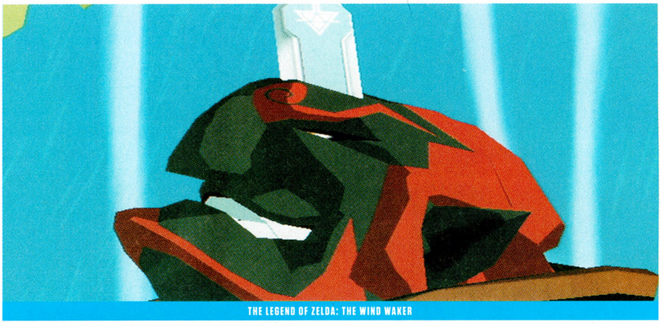
Tingle

Tingle is many things. He's a great cartographer, for example. He's also a fully grown man clad in a green elf costume who rides a balloon and says, "Tingle! Tingle! Kooloo-Limpah!"

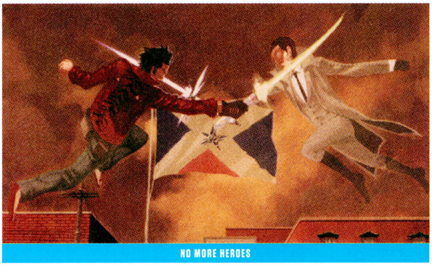


Wario

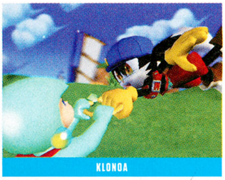
Essentially Mario's some-what-evil doppelganger, Wario is a pretty uncool dude. He is extremely greedy, eats loads of garlic, and has noxious farts. And yet we can't help but like him.



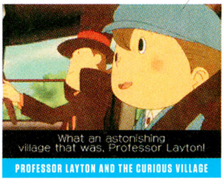
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER



NO MORE HEROES



KLONOA



What an astonishing village that was, Professor Layton!

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE

GRAND FINALES

ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR Astro Boy has two endings. First you get a not-so-good ending in which the world ends, then you get to go back through time and earn the true ending, in which Astro ultimately sacrifices himself for the good of humanity.

FINAL FANTASY VI While escaping from Kefka's collapsing tower, your party members have great character moments, cementing them as some of the most memorable Final Fantasy protagonists ever.

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE Just what is going on in the village of St. Mystere? When the credits roll, you'll discover the shocking truth behind the town, its inhabitants, and the elusive Golden Apple.

CHRONO TRIGGER Depending on when and how you fight Chrono Trigger's final boss, you can see one of more than a dozen very cool endings—including a visit with the game developers.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME You have to appreciate the prince's ingenuity, when—after the princess scolds him for stealing a smooch—he uses a magic dagger to rewind time and get out of trouble.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER An incredible final battle, a climax to a great story, and Ganon gets *stabbed in the face* with the Master Sword. What's not to love?

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS The relationship between Link and Midna was one of the most compelling in franchise history, and the way it wraps up is pitch perfect.

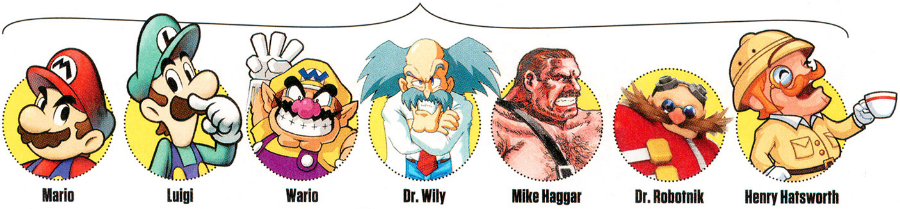
KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 DAYS If you've played through the previous Kingdom Hearts games, you probably know where 358/2 Days is heading, but that doesn't make the touching conclusion any less impactful.

KLONOA Because the rest of the game is so bright and cheerful, the final cutscene in Klonoa is like a punch to the gut. We didn't cry, though! We just got something stuck in our eyes.

NO MORE HEROES It's hard to encapsulate the sheer craziness of No More Heroes's ending, but let's just say that Travis Touchdown finds out more about his family than he ever wanted to know.

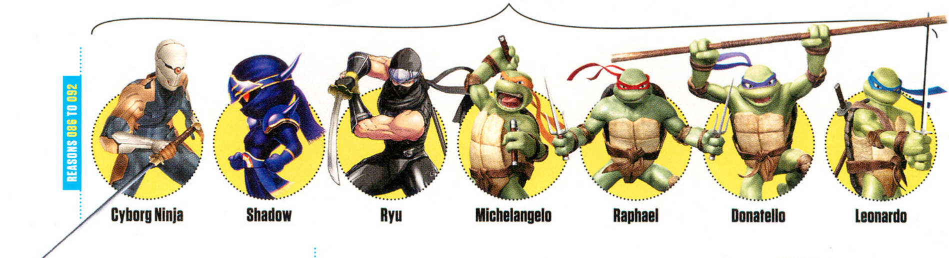
REASONS 079 TO 085

Mustaches


Mario
Luigi
Wario
Dr. Wily
Mike Haggar
Dr. Robotnik
Henry Hatsworth

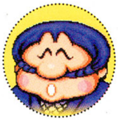
REASONS 086 TO 092

Ninjas


Cyborg Ninja
Shadow
Ryu
Michelangelo
Raphael
Donatello
Leonardo

REASON 093

Mustachioed Ninja

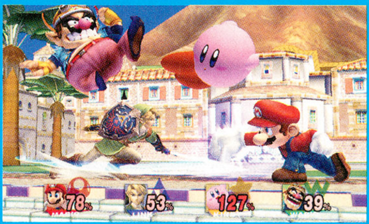

Ebisumaru
(AKA Dr.
Yang)

REASONS 094 TO 097

GREAT MULTIPLAYER EXPERIENCES

SUPER SMASH BROS. (SERIES) Fighting games are always better when you're playing against a friend, and Super Smash Bros. is no different. Its large selection of characters, outlandish special moves, and fierce, close-quarters combat make it infinitely replayable. And really, what's more fun than seeing Jigglypuff knock Ganondorf off of a stage?

MARIO KART (SERIES) What is best in Mario Kart? The weapon-filled racing of Vs. mode or the balloon-bursting mayhem of Battle mode? Whichever way you like to play, Mario Kart makes for a terrific multiplayer experience. All it takes is one well-timed Koopa Shell to turn the best of friends into the bitterest of enemies.



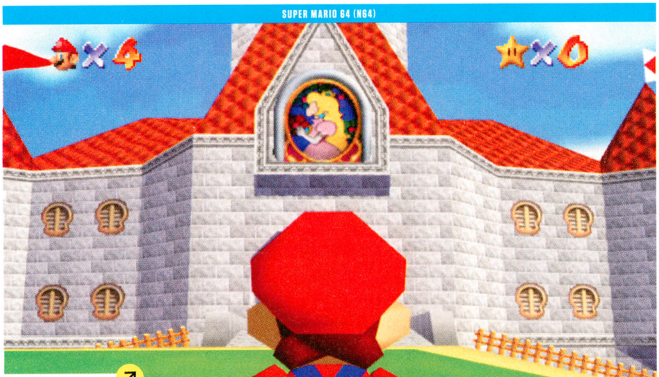
GOLDENEYE 007 (N64) Even though first-person shooters have made significant technological advances since the days of GoldenEye, many still remember this game as one of the finest examples of the genre. A good variety of weapons and some outstanding maps make this a true classic.

Wii SPORTS (SERIES) From young children to grandparents, everyone can have fun while playing Wii Sports. Getting up off of the couch and physically interacting with the game always leads to a great time when playing with your friends and family. The wide range of sports guarantees that there's a game to suit everybody.

REASONS 098 AND 099

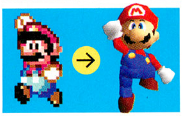
3-D TRAILBLAZERS

SUPER MARIO 64 (N64)

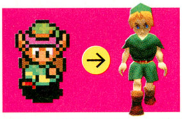


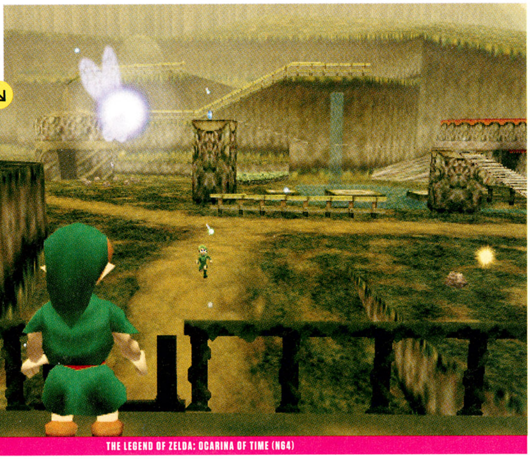
SUPER MARIO WORLD (SNES)

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (SNES)



The jump from Super NES to Nintendo 64 was one of the biggest shifts that gaming will ever go through.





THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (N64)

We don't say this enough, but thank you, Nintendo 64. Before you came along, 3-D polygonal graphics were mostly found in fringe areas of gaming such as PC flight simulators and occasional bad experiments, like Bubsy 3D: Furbitten Planet. But from the moment Mario appeared outside Peach's castle at the start of **SUPER MARIO 64**, 3-D games have given us experiences that 2-D titles—as much as we love 'em—never could.

It wasn't just the flashy visuals, highly interactive worlds, and smooth character animations that blew us away in Super Mario 64; what's truly remarkable about the title is that it pioneered the features that make action games work in 3-D space. From analog controls to the way the camera moves, the game provided the blueprint for modern game design.

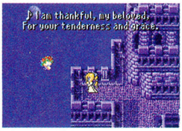
A short time later, **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME** arrived with a more refined approach and a key missing piece of the 3-D puzzle: the lock-on camera. Without it, something as common as shooting an arrow at an Octorok would be too frustrating to be fun.

We have appropriate respect for earlier titles like Star Fox and Virtua Fighter, which proved that 3-D gaming was a viable option, but it was Super Mario 64 and Ocarina of Time that took polygonal gameplay to the next level, showed the world how it's done, and forever changed the course of video games. These are two of the biggest milestones in video game history, which is why—despite the advancements of each series's later installments—those two games remain all-time favorites for millions of Mario and Zelda fans around the world.

REASON 100

The Opera Scene

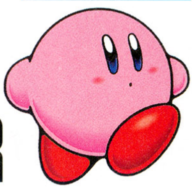
Opera and gaming don't really mix, but the exception to that rule is Final Fantasy VI. The game's legendary opera scene showed just how touching and sophisticated 16-bit RPGs could be, and proved to players that maybe—just maybe—opera wasn't quite as bad as we thought.



♪ I am thankful, my beloved,
For your tenderness and grace.

REASONS 101 AND 102

PINK POWER



Many gamers might not consider pink a "cool" color, but we heartily disagree. Both Little Mac and Kirby don the color, and it definitely works for them. Besides, you wouldn't want to mess with the guys who have beaten the likes of King Hippo and Meta Knight, would you?

REASON 103

↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ← → ← → B A START

If you remember only one cheat code, it's most likely the Konami code. Made famous by the original Contra on the NES, the Konami code has transcended Konami titles, unlocking goodies in a wide array of video games, as well as on websites such as Facebook and Google Reader.

REASONS 104 TO 109

BURIED HATCHETS

It's pretty awesome that Nintendo has made so much of its back catalog of NES, Super NES, and N64 games available on Virtual Console. It's just as awesome that Nintendo has teamed up with its former rivals such as Sega, SNK, and NEC to bring their games to Virtual Console as well.

GENESIS
16-BIT

SEGA GENESIS

The 16-bit wars are long over, but the great games from both sides live on thanks to Virtual Console. Genesis is home to can't-miss hits like Sonic the Hedgehog, Golden Axe, Gunstar Heroes, The Revenge of Shinobi, and ToeJam & Earl.

NEOGEO

Back in the day, the NeoGeo truly delivered arcade-quality gaming in your home—but the games cost a whopping $200 a pop. Thanks to Virtual Console, you can get gems such as The King of Fighters, Metal Slug, and Magician Lord for less than 10 bucks each.

TURBOGRAFX16

Though the TurboGrafx16 could never compete with the Genesis or the Super NES, it's home to some great shooters and standout titles such as Bonk's Adventure and Ys Book I & II.

COMMODORE 64

Commodore 64 games may not have aged as well as those of other platforms, but it's still pretty cool to have them on Virtual Console.

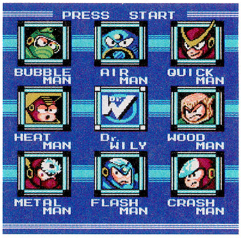
SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

The Sega Master System is a requisite piece of gaming history, if for no other reason than the fact that it's home to Phantasy Star, quite arguably the best RPG of the 8-bit era. (We didn't forget that the Game Gear is on Virtual Console, too, but...well... you know.)

ARCADE

Arcade games might not technically be considered direct competition, but even if there were no hatchets to bury, we love the idea of getting pixel-perfect arcade classics on Virtual Console.

REASONS 110 TO 117



Eight Robot Masters

Mega Man has battled (and defeated) a lot of renegade robots in his time, but the most noteworthy group of foes has to be the crew from Mega Man 2. Bubble Man, Air Man, Wood Man, Crash Man, Metal Man, Quick Man, Flash Man, and Heat Man were cool and diverse—the perfect rogues' gallery for the Blue Bomber.

REASONS 118 TO 143

CLASSIC QUOTES

Many of gaming's most memorable lines of dialogue accompany amazing moments of gameplay, but in a world where today's typo can become tomorrow's next big internet sensation, quotes can also become legendary due to outright silliness. Our list of favorites includes both.

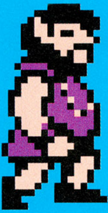
Do a barrel roll!

PEPPY HARE, STAR FOX 64

A WINNER IS YOU.

PRO WRESTLING

ERROR, ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK



I am Error.

FIGHT, MEGA MAN! FOR EVERLASTING PEACE!

MEGA MAN

Uh-oh! The truck have started to move.

SNAKE, METAL GEAR

I feel asleep!!

GUARD, METAL GEAR

Thank you Mario! But our Princess is another castle!

TOAD, SUPER MARIO BROS.

DOC LOUIS, PUNCH-OUT!!

Join the Nintendo Fun Club today! Mac.

WHAT A HORRIBLE NIGHT TO HAVE A CURSE.

CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

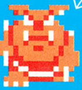
CONGRATURATION THIS STORY IS HAPPY END

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

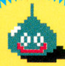
CRONO'S MOM, CHRONO TRIGGER

Good morning, Crono!

It's a secret to everybody.



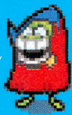
MOBLIN, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA



A SLIME DRAWS NEAR!

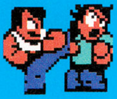
DRAGON WARRIOR

It's dangerous to go alone! Take this.



I have fury!

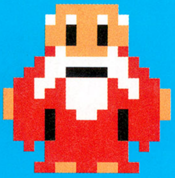
FAWFUL, MARIO & LUIGI SERIES



Barf!

RANDOM THUG, RIVER CITY RANSOM

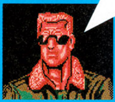
Dodongo dislikes smoke.

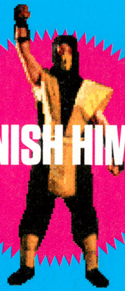


OLD MAN, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

Are you a bad enough dude to rescue the president?

BAD DUDES

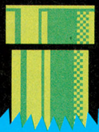




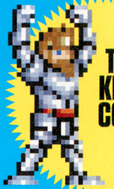
FINISH HIM!

MORTAL KOMBAT SERIES

WELCOME TO WARP ZONE!



SUPER MARIO BROS.

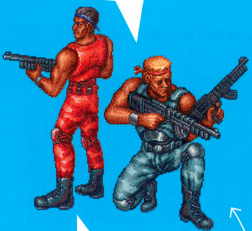


TAKE A KEY FOR COMING IN!

SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

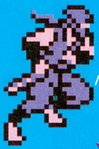
It's time for revenge.

Just a girl. Get out of here!



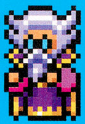
BILL RIZER / LANCE BEAN, CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

Let's attack aggressively!



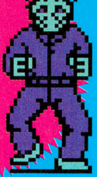
RYU HAYABUSA, NINJA GAIDEN

You spoony bard!



TELLAH, FINAL FANTASY IV

YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ARE DEAD. GAME OVER.



FRIDAY THE 13TH

REASONS 144 TO 146

ARMCHAIR GENERALS

While many Nintendo protagonists are focused on defeating the bad guys single-handedly, a good leader knows how to delegate. Three strategy-heavy franchises—Advance Wars, Fire Emblem, and Pikmin—illustrate this concept perfectly, and prove that it never hurts to have an army at your disposal.

DUAL SCREENS

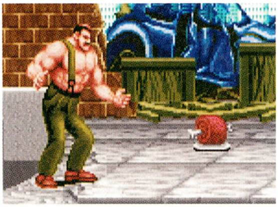
REASON 147
REASON 148

Who'd have thought that adding an extra screen could make handheld games even better? Well, obviously Nintendo did, but we admit that we weren't sold at first. But from breathtaking bosses that are two screens tall to maps that are always just a glimpse away, the extra screen has been used in countless cool ways, and now we can't imagine life without it.

REASONS 149 TO 154

QUESTIONABLE CUISINE

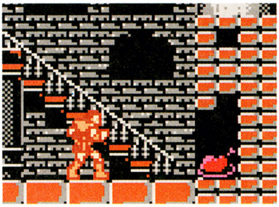
Video games have a long history of teaching people the beneficial effects of eating leftover food off the ground. Here are our favorites.



BBQ (FINAL FIGHT)

Don't forget, kids: if you're ever hurt, just punch over the nearest garbage can and eat any meat you find inside. It's certain to fix you up in a jiffy.

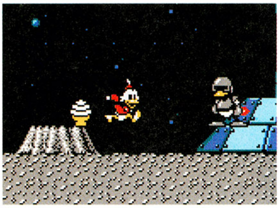
TASTINESS RATING: ●●●○○



ROAST (CASTLEVANIA)

If we were exploring a haunted castle and found an old roast behind a crumbling wall, we probably wouldn't eat it. That's why we're not vampire slayers.

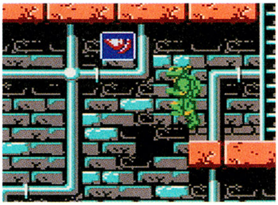
TASTINESS RATING: ●●○○○



ICE CREAM, CAKE (DUCKTALES)

What's especially awesome about DuckTales is that you aren't just eating randomly discarded cake and ice cream—you're eating randomly discarded cake and ice cream that you find *on the moon.*

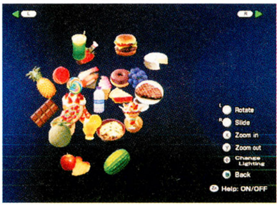
TASTINESS RATING: ●●●●○



PIZZA (TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES)

We certainly applaud the use of pizza as a health-regenerating item, but we'd be a little wary about pizza we found hovering in the air in a sewer.

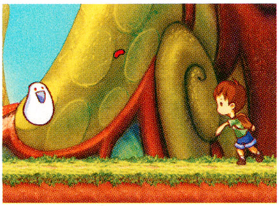
TASTINESS RATING: ●●●○○



BURGERS, PIE, FRUIT, ETC. (SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL)

Super Smash Bros. Brawl is a veritable buffet of deliciousness. Pies, melons, donuts, hamburgers, chicken legs, strawberries, and more are on hand to keep you in the fight. But...just where did it all come from? Do we even want to know?

TASTINESS RATING: ●●●●●



JELLY BEANS (A BOY AND HIS BLOB)

Unlike the other entries on this list, the jelly beans in A Boy and His Blob aren't for restoring your health. They're for transforming your alien blob buddy into a number of useful forms, which makes them pretty darn cool—as well as yummy.

TASTINESS RATING: ●●●●●

REASONS 155 TO 164

Overlooked Gems

ASTRO BOY
OMEGA FACTOR
BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG
ROCKET robot on wheels
Ogre Battle 64
Person of Lordly Caliber
DRILL DOZER
METAL ARMS
GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM
ZACK & WIKI
Quest for Barbaros' Treasure
SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
Shantae

ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR (GBA) Nobody does pure, unadulterated action like Treasure, and the legendary studio brought an obvious reverence for the source material to Omega Factor. The end result was incredibly polished, shockingly deep, and, above all else, fun. Proof positive that licensed games don't have to suck.

BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG (GCN) A game like Billy Hatcher would have been a massive hit during the 16-bit era, before everyone decided they were too cool to play as a kid in a rooster suit. We just appreciate the unique play mechanics and inventive level design. That opening theme song may be too dorky even for us, though.

SHANTAE (GBC) Few Game Boy Color titles pushed the hardware like Shantae, but that accomplishment went largely unnoticed because it came a full year after the release of the Game Boy Advance. Hopefully the upcoming (and more timely) DSiWare follow-up manages to draw greater attention.

ROCKET: ROBOT ON WHEELS (N64) Before they went on to fame and fortune with the Sly Cooper series and Infamous, the folks at Sucker Punch debuted with this delightfully quirky platformer. The game's robust physics engine was remarkable at the time, and presented its charming protagonist with a diverse set of challenges.

METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM (GCN) At first blush, Metal Arms looks like any number of generic action games. Dig a bit deeper, though, and you'd find a surprisingly original effort with a great sense of humor and brutally satisfying robot-on-robot combat. Oh, and you occasionally get to pilot a *giant* robot. It's a cornucopia of robo-awesomeness.

DRILL DOZER (GBA) Though best known for its work on the Pokémon franchise, developer Game Freak also crafted this ingenious platformer. Drill Dozer is a case study in classic game design: take a simple concept—in this case drilling—and continually build on it with all sorts of creative implementations.

SKIES OF ARCADIA: LEGENDS (GCN) From a pure gameplay standpoint, Skies of Arcadia didn't bring much new to the table, but the game had charm to burn and an infectious spirit of adventure. Plus, at a time when most RPG protagonists were angsty jerkstores, Arcadia's eminently likeable cast was like a breath of fresh air.

OGRE BATTLE 64: PERSON OF LORDLY CALIBER (N64) It's hard to believe that any game boasting such an awesome subtitle could be overlooked, but such was the fate of this strategy-RPG classic. The few persons of lordly caliber who actually played Ogre Battle 64 discovered staggering levels of troop customization and a branching story rife with political intrigue.

ZACK & WIKI: QUEST FOR BARBAROS' TREASURE (Wii) On the flip side of the naming coin is Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure, which may have the *least* catchy title of all time. The game itself couldn't be more captivating, though. It's a brilliant update on the point-and-click adventure, and even to this day, few games make better use of the Wii Remote.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL (GCN) This Michel Ancel masterpiece is the poster child for overlooked gems. Bring up BG&E to anyone who's played it, and you'll likely be subjected to a frothy-mouthed rant ranking the game's subpar sales among the great shortcomings of modern civilization. And they're absolutely right.

REASON 165

NINTENDO FANS

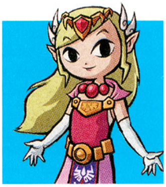
Sure, we're biased, but Nintendo fans are the best in the world. They tend to wear their fanboyism on their sleeves, or, as is often the case, on their skin—many have tattoos of the Triforce and other iconic Nintendo images. Our favorite fan moment is by far the heavily Googled unveiling of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess at E3 2004, in which the gathered crowd screamed with joy at the big reveal, and cheered Shigeru Miyamoto—who stood on stage with a replica Master Sword in hand—like a rock god. And these were industry professionals!

REASONS 166 TO 170

Damsels in Distress

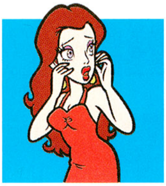
Princess Peach (Mario series)

With her sweet and innocent demeanor, Peach is the archetypical video game damsel in distress. Even so, she's proved that she's just as capable of saving the boys when they're in trouble.



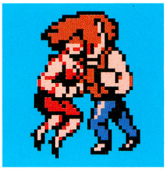
Princess Zelda (The Legend of Zelda series)

Zelda is such an important character that the series's hero, Link, rarely even gets mentioned in the titles of his own games. When he does, it's in the subtitle, the poor guy.



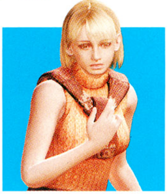
Pauline (Donkey Kong)

Before he got involved with that Mushroom Kingdom crowd, Mario risked life and limb to save his first girlfriend from an angry ape. Pauline recently had a cameo in Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2.



Marion (Double Dragon series)

Poor Marion has been through a lot. She was gut-punched and kidnapped by thugs, killed and resurrected, and then kidnapped again. Billy and Jimmy have their hands full protecting this gal.



Ashley Graham (Resident Evil 4)

She's a superhot college student and the daughter of the president. What's not to love about Ashley? She even puts the moves on Leon after he rescues her from a crazed cult.

REASONS 171 TO 174

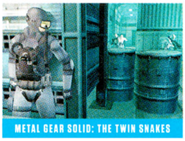
THEME SONGS THAT STICK WITH YOU

Nintendo systems are home to some of the most memorable game music ever composed—theme songs that etch their way into your mind and compel you to whistle or hum them at any given time of day for no reason other than the fact that they're great. After much debate and a little bloodshed, we've picked the classic main themes from Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, Final Fantasy, and Dragon Quest as the most memorable of all.

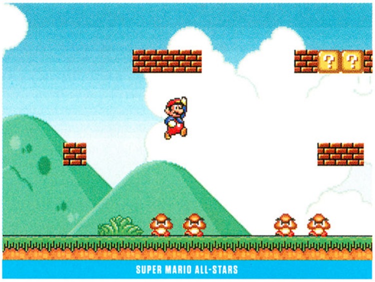
REASONS 175 TO 179

FAVORITE REMAKES

FINAL FANTASY IV



METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES



SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS

METROID: ZERO MISSION

RESIDENT EVIL

SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS (SUPER NES) How do you improve upon a timeless series like Super Mario Bros.? Nintendo figured it out. They took the first three games in the series, threw in The Lost Levels (the Japanese SMB2), spruced up the graphics and sound, and compiled it all into a single Super NES release. Voilá—you have the most fun- and value-packed game cartridge ever made.

FINAL FANTASY IV (NINTENDO DS) The DS version of FFIV managed to capture all of the goofy charm of the original, while updating its graphics, mechanics, and difficulty for a contemporary audience.

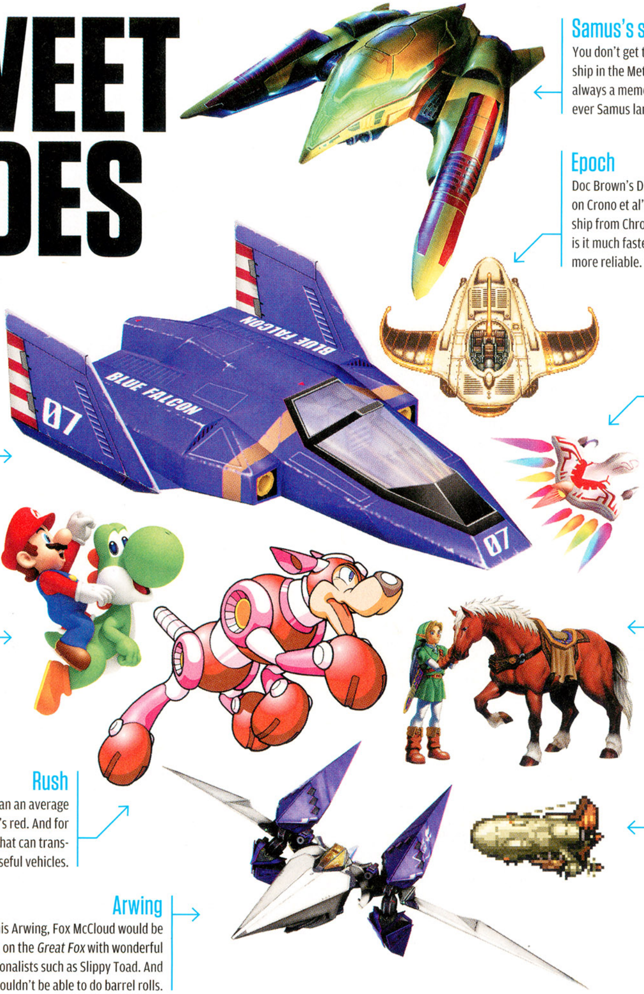
RESIDENT EVIL (GAMECUBE) This clever remake both modernized Resident Evil's classic first chapter and subverted expectations with new areas and fast-moving zombies. It's the only way to play the Resident Evil that started it all.

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES (GAMECUBE) Yes, The Twin Snakes is easier and its cut-scenes are more over-the-top than the original Metal Gear Solid, but it's also a graphically superior version of one of the best games of all time.

METROID: ZERO MISSION (GAME BOY ADVANCE) As if the original Metroid weren't plenty good enough, the 2004 Game Boy Advance remake powered up the graphics and added cool new abilities, a much-needed in-game map, and a surprise bonus mission after the original ending.

REASONS 180 TO 188

SWEET RIDES



Samus's ship

You don't get to do a lot with Samus's ship in the Metroid games, but it's always a memorable moment whenever Samus lands on a new planet.

Epoch

Doc Brown's DeLorean has nothing on Crono et al's time-traveling airship from Chrono Trigger. Not only is it much faster, but it's also far more reliable.

Blue Falcon

Sure, Captain Falcon's racer doesn't necessarily have the best stats of all the F-Zero ships, but it's certainly the most unforgettable.

Dragoon

Not only is the Dragoon called a "legendary machine" in Kirby Air Ride, but it's also a formidable power-up in Super Smash Bros. Brawl.

Yoshi

Yoshi is such a great ride that he comes ready-made to be one—he's equipped with a saddle and shoes when he hatches from his egg!

Epona

A horse is a horse, of course, but Epona is much more than that: she is also Link's best friend (besides Navi, that is) and a huge fan of ocarina music.

Rush

Rush is so much more than an average dog. For one thing, he's red. And for another, he's a robot that can transform into a variety of useful vehicles.

Falcon

Yes, chocobos are the most iconic rides in the Final Fantasy universe, but getting the airship *Falcon* was one of the most epic moments in Final Fantasy VI.

Arwing

Without his Arwing, Fox McCloud would be trapped on the *Great Fox* with wonderful conversationalists such as Slippy Toad. And he wouldn't be able to do barrel rolls.

REASONS 189 TO 191

PIECES OF THE TRIFORCE

The sacred relic at the center of the Legend of Zelda saga is one of the most iconic images in video games. Just ask the dozens of readers who have sent us pictures of their Triforce tattoos, or WWE Superstar Cody Rhodes, who wears the emblem on his boots. More importantly, there's something sort of poetic about how it connects the saga's three main characters, each of whom embodies one of the relic's virtues: Link with the Triforce of Courage, Zelda with the Triforce of Wisdom, and Ganon with the Triforce of Power. We'd just be happy with the Triforce of Pie.

REASONS 192 TO 200

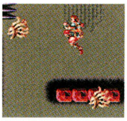
THINGS WE LOVE TO HATE

Wallmasters (The Legend of Zelda series)

Wallmasters are among the most terrifying enemies in the Zelda series for one simple, annoying reason: they'll force you to replay part of your current dungeon.

Spiny Shell (Mario Kart series)

There's nothing worse in Mario Kart than leading the pack in the final lap, only to have your victory turned into defeat by a nearly unavoidable Spiny Shell.

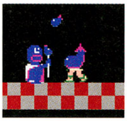


Medusa Heads (Castlevania series)

Medusa Heads aren't especially strong or tough, but their movement patterns make them virtually impossible to avoid.

The Dog (Duck Hunt)

Fact: There isn't a Duck Hunt player in the world who hasn't wanted to blast that darn dog when he laughs at you for letting the ducks get away.



Eggplant Wizard (Kid Icarus)

There are many unfortunate fates to endure in Kid Icarus, but by far the most humiliating is getting turned into a blasted eggplant.

Hammer Bros. (Mario series)

Why is it that every time you try to run past the Hammer Bros., you either crash straight into a hammer, or a brother jumps down and lands directly on your head?

Instant-Death Spikes (Mega Man series)

The only thing worse than instant-death spikes in a Mega Man game is instant-death spikes combined with disappearing platforms. Dr. Wily is a mean dude.

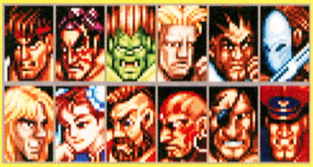
Rainbow Road (Mario Kart series)

The ultimate course in Mario Kart is always very cool and will inevitably cause you to fall to your doom over and over again. Remember, practice makes perfect!

Chris Shepperd (Nintendo Power)

For the past several years, former screenshot specialist and staff writer Chris Shepperd has been abused in many ways, and we've loved every minute of it.

REASONS 201 TO 212



THE WORLD WARRIORS

When you think of fighting-game characters, you've got to think of Ryu, Ken, Guile, Chun-Li, E. Honda, Blanka, Dhalsim, Zangief, Balrog, Vega, Sagat, and M. Bison—the globe-hopping cast of Street Fighter II. They're the definitive video game martial artists, and their arrival on the Super NES helped cement the system's success.

REASONS 213 AND 214

RED AND BLUE

Those might seem like normal colors to some people, but for anyone who played games back in 1998, red and blue mean Bulbasaur, Charmander, Squirtle, and the explosive start of a gaming revolution. With the release of Pokémon Red and Pokémon Blue Versions, the Pokémon phenomenon was suddenly everywhere: on TV, in movie theaters, and on the screens of millions of Game Boy systems. There have been many more Pokémon games since then, but for anyone who bought one of those first two Game Paks, it's hard to beat the excitement that accompanied the introduction of something so amazingly different.

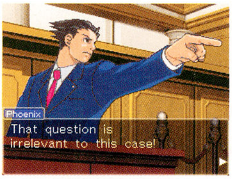
REASONS 215 TO 218

CAREER GUIDANCE

Being a world-saving hero is common in video games. But sometimes, when ordinary jobs are turned into gaming activities, the result is something unexpectedly awesome.

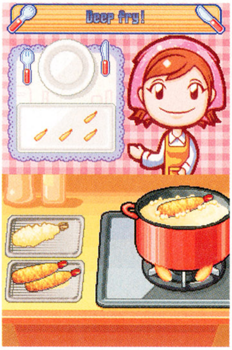
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney — LAWYER

Being a lawyer might not sound like the greatest premise for a video game, but once you encounter all the zany characters and complicated plots (and realize that the game has very little to do with actual legal procedures), you'll discover that it's surprisingly rad.


Phoenix
That question is irrelevant to this case!

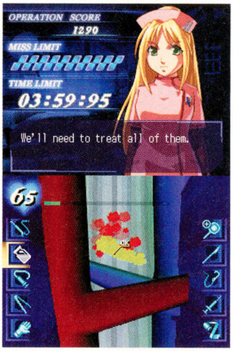
Cooking Mama — CHEF

Cooking in real life can be tough, but when you turn it into bite-sized minigames it suddenly becomes fun for all ages (and you don't have to clean up afterwards). Virtual cooking has also probably prevented the NP staff from becoming morbidly obese.



Trauma Center: Under the Knife — SURGEON

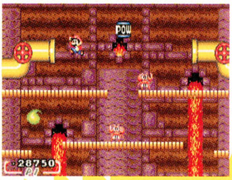
Many video games are about laying the hurt down on the bad guys, but Trauma Center is just the opposite—you're helping people in need by mending bones, stitching up wounds, and the like. The action is surprisingly intense, challenging, and unlike anything else out there.



We'll need to treat all of them.

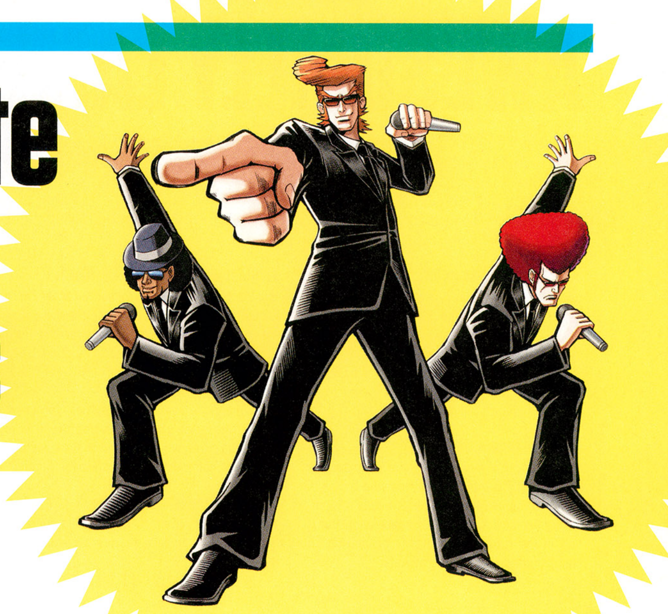
Mario Bros. — PLUMBER

Mario Bros. may be the most authentic career-simulation game of all time. If you've ever looked behind your toilet, you know that there's a very good chance there really are killer crabs and turtles back there, ready to burst out of the pipes at any minute.



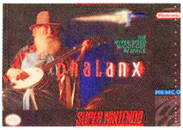
REASONS 219 TO 221

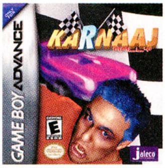
The Elite Beat Agents

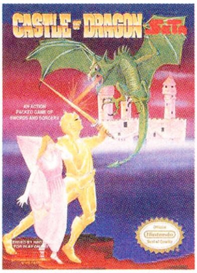


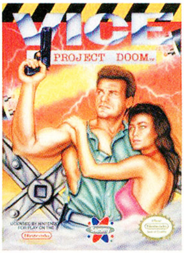
Secret agents are cool to begin with, but secret agents who sing and dance their way to victory? They're the coolest of the cool. There's virtually no situation that Derek, Morris, and J—collectively known as the Elite Beat Agents—can't use their smooth moves to overcome.

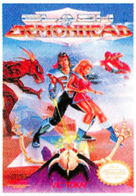
REASONS 222 TO 229

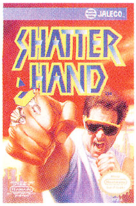

Phalanx
Nintendo
The Hyperspeed Shoot-out in Space
KEMCO
SUPER NINTENDO

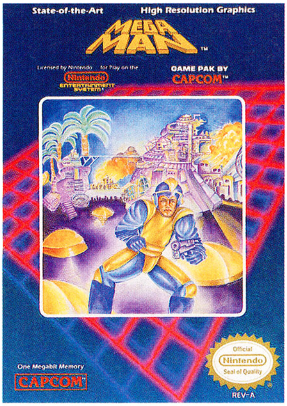

GAME BOY ADVANCE
KARNAAJ
E
Jaleco

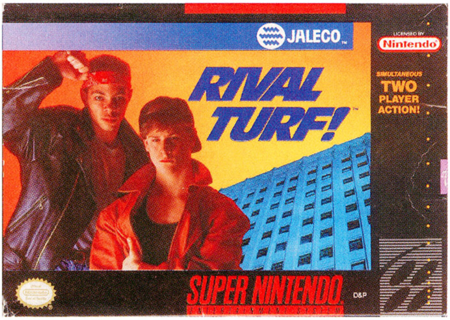

CASTLE of DRAGON
An action packed game of swords and sorcery
Official Nintendo Seal of Quality


VICE
PROJECT DOOM
Licensed by Nintendo for play on the Nintendo


CLASH AT DEMONHEAD


JALECO
SHATTER HAND


State-of-the-Art
High Resolution Graphics
MEGA MAN
Licensed by Nintendo for Play on the
Nintendo Entertainment System
GAME PAK BY
CAPCOM
One Megabit Memory
CAPCOM
Official Nintendo Seal of Quality
REV-A


JALECO
LICENSED BY Nintendo
RIVAL TURF!
SIMULTANEOUS TWO PLAYER ACTION!
SUPER NINTENDO
D&P

AWESOMELY LAME BOX ART

The past couple of decades have gifted us with an almost endless supply of good games. And behind (well, in front of, actually) every good game is some good cover art. But what about those times when something goes so very, horribly wrong? When, late at night, a developer's dog manages to sneak into the building and attempt, *Ratatouille*-style, to become a box artisan? You get the following eight affronts to the very term "box *art*."

Shatter Hand (Jaleco, NES)

How extreme is the guy on the cover of Shatter Hand? Let us count the ways. He's wearing a sleeveless shirt (to show off his radical physique), has a pair of awesome sunglasses, and... is that...? Yes, he's a cyborg, which is basically an extreme human. He even has the extreme audacity to punch the game's logo.

Phalanx (Kemco, SNES)

Nothing says "'Hyperspeed Shoot-out in Space"' like an old, bearded hillbilly playing a banjo. Though it almost looks like he's fondly remembering his days as a hotshot space pilot. But if he's in the future, shouldn't he be playing an electric banjo...or at least a keytar?

Vice: Project Doom (Sammy, NES)

The early days of Mel Gibson's career were fraught with money troubles, so the struggling actor turned to modeling for box art. At least that's how we imagine this artrocity came to be.

Karnaaj Rally (Jaleco, GBA)

"Hey, Jimmy, can you come over here for a sec? I made this racing game and don't know what to put on the cover. What? Put *you* on the cover and make your hair blue? You're a lifesaver, Jimmy!"

Castle of Dragon (Seta, NES)

The only level on which this box art succeeds is that it does, in fact, feature a castle and a dragon.

Clash at Demonhead (Vic Tokai, NES)

We have to admit that if we found ourselves caught in the middle of the amazing scenario depicted on this box cover, we'd probably neglect to notice the demon on our right about to kill us, too.

Rival Turf! (Jaleco, SNES)

The marketing people on this game actually had a pretty outside-the-box idea—which should have really stayed off the box. After all, who is the target audience going to find more intimidating than thugs their own age?

Mega Man (Capcom, NES)

We have a theory about how something as purely horrendous as the original Mega Man box art ever got printed, and it involves asking people who've never played the game to send in fan art, then, instead of using the winning entry, going with the loser.

REASON 230

THE REINVENTION OF RESIDENT EVIL

For Nintendo fans, it was exciting enough to have the next chapter of the Resident Evil series being developed as a GameCube exclusive. What no one expected was that instead of phoning in another tried-and-true sequel, Shinji Mikami's team at Capcom would use the opportunity to completely transform the venerable series into something even better. Five years later, Resident Evil 4 still stands as the high point of the series.

REASON 231

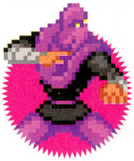
GAME BOY

Even before it took the console world by storm with the NES, Nintendo was mastering the art of portable gaming with Game & Watch, a popular series of LCD-based handheld titles. In 1989, Nintendo evolved that concept into the Game Boy, the first truly portable game system. The original Game Boy system may seem bulky, and its technology is extremely outdated by today's standards, but at the time it was revolutionary. Its huge library of games (including the beloved Tetris, which was included with the system) made it a hit, and it helped usher in the modern age of handheld games.

REASONS 232 TO 236

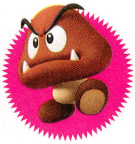
FAVORITE PUNCHING BAGS

There are a lot of adversaries in video games—some strong, some not so strong. These guys fall into the latter category, but fighting them can be oh so enjoyable.



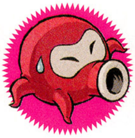
FOOT SOLDIERS (TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES SERIES)

There are few things as fulfilling as laying waste to an army of mindless ninja robots, especially when you hurl them into the screen or slam them into each other in TMNT IV on the Super NES.



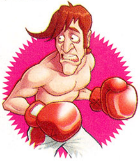
GOOMBAS (MARIO SERIES)

Alas, the poor Goomba, the most basic lackey in Bowser's army. It's hard to not feel a little guilty about stomping the suckers flat, but it sure is satisfying.



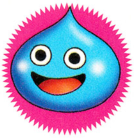
OCTOROKS (THE LEGEND OF ZELDA SERIES)

The thing about Octoroks is that they spit rocks at you. Or... are they firing rocks out of their noses? Either way, it's gross and rude, which is why they deserve to be defeated.



GLASS JOE (PUNCH-OUT!! SERIES)

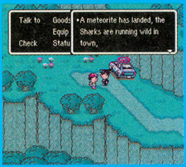
Glass Joe isn't literally a punching bag for Little Mac, but he comes awfully close. You have to admire Joe's persistence, but it's probably time for the guy to retire.



SLIMES (DRAGON QUEST SERIES)

The Slimes are just so cute and friendly-looking, it's almost hard to slay them. But, you know, a hero's gotta do what a hero's gotta do.

REASON 237



Talk to Goods
Equip
Check Statu

•A meteorite has landed, the Sharks are running wild in town,

THE ULTIMATE CULT HIT

Just about every game has fans. Some games, however, have legions of fans—obsessive, dedicated fans. EarthBound is one of those games. This 1995 Super NES RPG has built up a loyal cult following, and it's not hard to see why. The game is filled with wonderful characters and its simple, yet beautiful graphics perfectly complement its humorous story. The game's hero, Ness, stars in Smash Bros., but those loyal fans crave more.

REASON 238

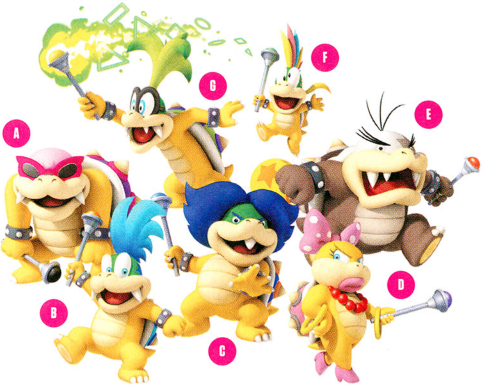
KOJI KONDO

The simple, catchy tunes of Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda rank among the most memorable compositions of the 20th century. While his contemporaries struggled, Nintendo composer Koji Kondo thrived within the limitations of the NES console's 8-bit sound chip, creating unforgettable soundtracks for many of the company's early releases. Although he's been less prolific in recent years, Kondo's talents have scaled nicely with the times, and his recent contributions to Super Mario Galaxy and The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess are among the highlights of his long career. We love you, Koji.

REASONS 239 TO 245

The Koopalings

First introduced in Super Mario Bros. 3, Bowser's seven Koopalings went on to become some of Nintendo's most beloved bad guys. Roy **(A)**, Larry **(B)**, Ludwig **(C)**, Wendy **(D)**, Morton **(E)**, Lemmy **(F)**, and Iggy **(G)** featured eccentric designs that filled them with personality. The troupe went on to star in Super Mario World as well as the occasional spin-off game, such as Yoshi's Safari. Despite cameos in Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, the Koopalings have been overshadowed in recent years by Bowser Jr. We were thrilled to see the tiny tyrants make their triumphant return in New Super Mario Bros. Wii. Let's hope that the brats stick around for a while.

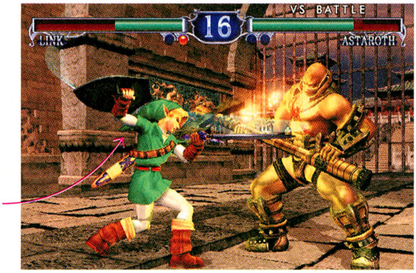


REASONS 246 TO 248

GUEST STARS

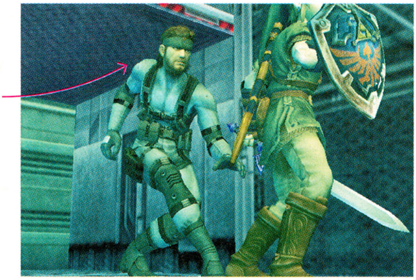
LINK (SOUL CALIBUR II)

Though Namco's acclaimed fighting game appeared on all three major consoles of the time, the soul burned brightest on GameCube with the inclusion of Link.



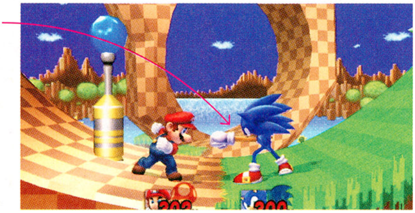
SOLID SNAKE (SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL)

If you're going to have a brawl to determine the baddest figure in video games, Solid Snake needs to be at the top of the invite list. Otherwise, he'll just sneak in with a cardboard box.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL)

After spending years in a battle for marketplace dominance, Mario and Sonic finally got to punch each other in the face thanks to Super Smash Bros. Brawl.



REASON 249

NINTENDO POWER
SUPER MARIO WORLD
FEATURES
THE SOURCE FOR NEWS AND STRATEGIES STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

Playing with Power

It may seem like we're patting ourselves on the back here, but all of us were Nintendo Power readers long before we were hired to write for the magazine. In the years before websites and message boards, NP was the only way to keep up with the latest Nintendo news, and it provided a sense of community for players nationwide. No other magazine has helped shape the gaming world as much, and we work hard to ensure that Nintendo Power continues to be essential reading.

REASON 250

MIYAMOTO

IF IT WEREN'T FOR Shigeru Miyamoto, you might not be reading this right now. Miyamoto isn't the only person responsible for Nintendo's success, but he's the man behind a number of its biggest hits—Donkey Kong, Mario Bros., and The Legend of Zelda, to name a few—and he's been involved with almost every game and piece of hardware that Nintendo has created in recent years.

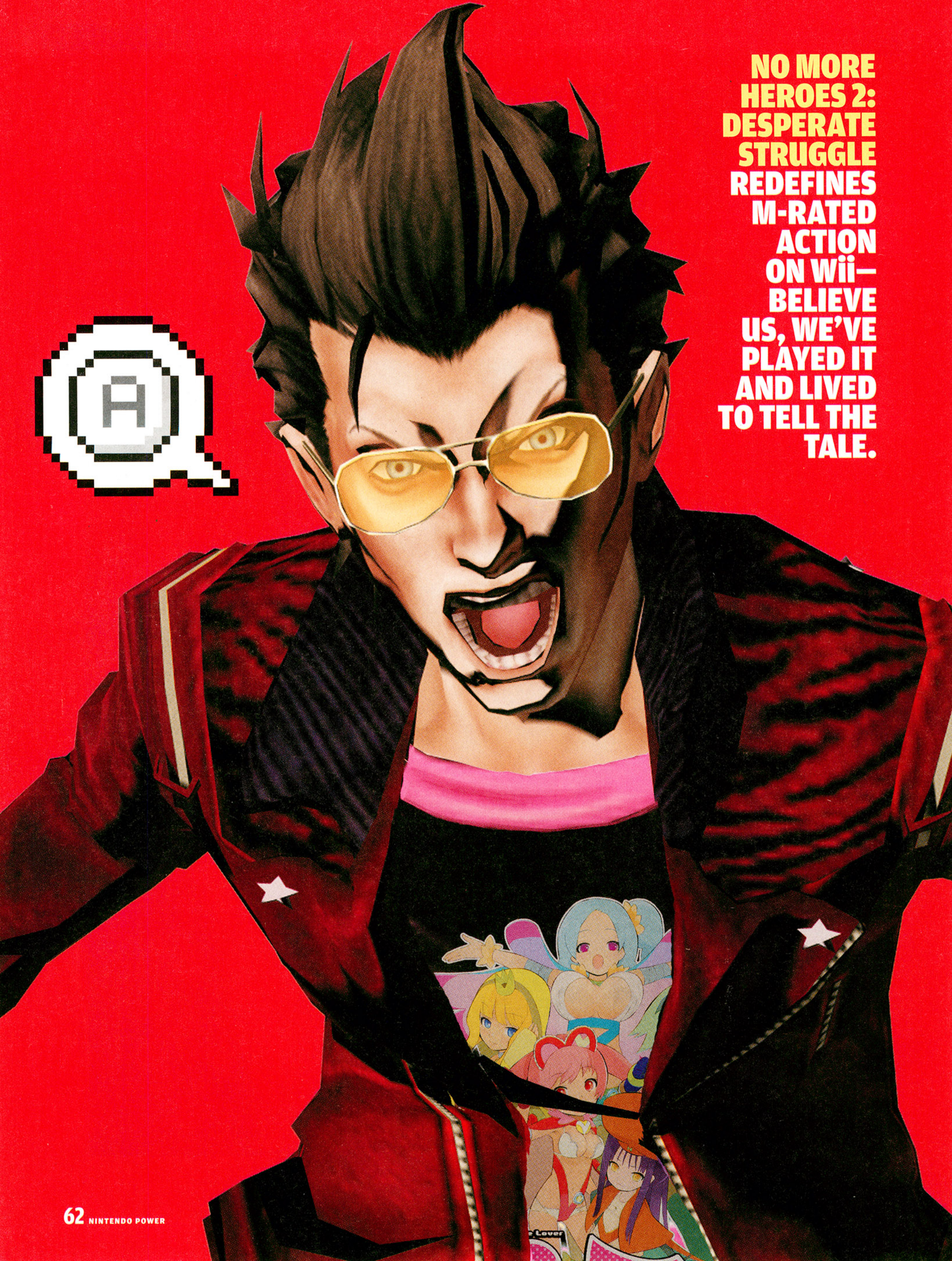
Though Miyamoto—the director and general manager of Nintendo's Entertainment and Analysis division—could be considered the father of modern interactive entertainment, it's his experiences outside of gaming that have helped shape the titles that bring players so much joy. "I feel that as you create and try to flesh out a project, it's very important for you to kind of reflect back on your own experiences," said Miyamoto in a 2007 Nintendo Power interview. "It's a natural thing to do, but my feeling is that the more you're able to do that and the more you're able to find some overlap between the things you're creating and the experiences you've had, then generally the better that process goes. And while of course I'm happy to have all of our fans playing in our virtual worlds, to me it's also very important for people to go out and experience real life in the real world, because those are the experiences that you'll be able to draw on in the future when you're doing whatever it is that you end up doing. So that's why when people ask me, I always say that while it's great that people are playing video games, at the same time I want them, on a day when the weather is nice, to go outside and experience the world. Go see the world with their parents and grandparents, and experience the world with other people."

Despite his impressive résumé, Miyamoto never stops trying to come up with new and compelling game ideas, nor does he limit his thought process to certain series, certain characters, or even certain audiences. He has an uncanny ability to home in on the "fun factor" of a concept and bring it to the forefront, no matter what that concept may be. As Miyamoto explained, "For me what's most important is trying to find those elements of fun that are going to attract people who never play games or are going to continue to entertain people who are playing games. So for me, it's not so much about how we use the characters as how we find the unique, core elements of fun and bring those to people. Usually the way that I design a game, I don't start by thinking about a character. I start by thinking about a fun gameplay element. And we flesh that gameplay element out until we know what the game is going to be. Then what we do at that point is we look and we say, 'OK, if we use this particular franchise, is that going to help bring this idea to fruition, and help flesh the idea out?' Or maybe if we apply, say, Mario or Pikmin to this core gameplay element, then maybe it will help that gameplay element succeed better."

It's no exaggeration to say that Miyamoto is largely responsible for gaming as we know it.

DONKEY KONG
1981
SUPER MARIO BROS.
1985
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
1987
HE KING OF GAM

THE END



NO MORE HEROES 2: DESPERATE STRUGGLE REDEFINES M-RATED ACTION ON Wii—BELIEVE US, WE'VE PLAYED IT AND LIVED TO TELL THE TALE.

DESPERATE TIMES

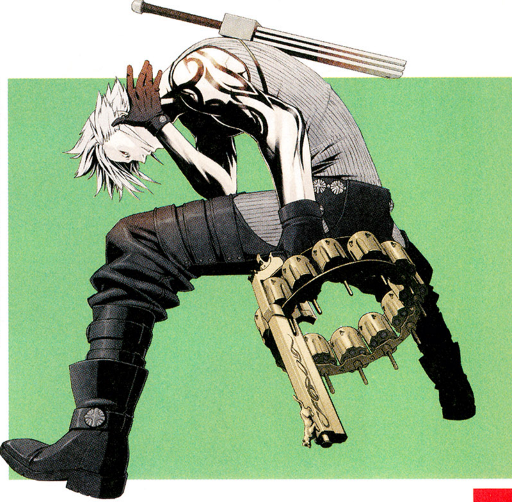
IT BEGINS WITH A FIGHT. Travis Touchdown, once the world's No. 1-ranked assassin, has become something of an urban legend in the city of Santa Destroy. But Skelter Helter (the brother of Travis's first kill, Helter Skelter) has found him—atop a high-rise with a full moon hanging in the sky. This is how No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle starts. No flashbacks, no "previously on"—just a quick rundown of the controls before putting players up against a very vengeful opponent. He's also not taking it easy on Touchdown—or on players. It's get with the program or get lost.

The rooftop isn't very large—perfect for keeping the pace of this first battle redlined. All of the basics are put to the test: performing high and low attacks by tilting the Wii Remote controller up or down, respectively; evading or rolling in for a close attack using the Control Pad; mimicking on-screen prompts to perform stylish sword attacks; but there are also new elements, like waving the remote when running to pull off a charging slash, or pressing left or right on the Control Stick just before an enemy strikes to slide out of harm's way in slow mo, allowing you to land multiple hits.

Skelter Helter is a tough opponent by the measure of most games, but he's just a taste of what's to come as Touchdown embarks on his "desperate struggle" to avenge his best

BY RANDY NELSON

PLATFORM Wii | PUBLISHER UBISOFT | DEVELOPER GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE | RELEASE JANUARY 2010



friend's death and reclaim his title—yeah, he's been bumped all the way down to No. 51 (a nod to executive director Goichi "Suda51" Suda) in the rankings. Before we embarked on Travis's mission of revenge, we got some downtime in his pad at Hotel No More Heroes.

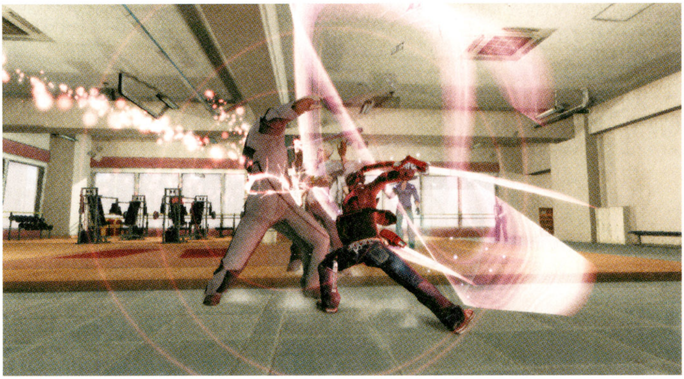
HOME GEEK HOME

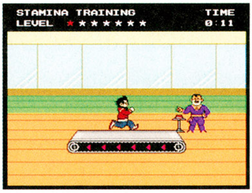
Travis's residence will be familiar to anyone who played the first game, and a surprise to anyone who's just catching up with Touchdown's exploits. It's a total geek den, decorated floor to ceiling with action figures, wrestling masks, and characters from his favorite anime, *Pure White Lover Bizarre Jelly*. He's even got an old-school-style top-down shoot-'em-up based on it that you can play on his TV. He also has a 25-lb. cat (see the "Fat Cat" sidebar). As in the original No More Heroes, Travis is a stylish nerd-turned-assassin. His closet is filled with loads of new T-shirts, jackets, belts, pants, shoes and sunglasses that you'll either find during missions or be able to buy at Santa Destroy's Airport 51 with the money you earn doing odd jobs.

Yep—it's not all fun and Beam Katana dismemberment for Travis. He has to make money somehow, and one of the ways he does it is by working jobs. In Desperate Struggle, these jobs are presented as NES-style 2-D games that are...wait for it...really challenging. But they're also charming and a whole lot of fun. We can see coming back to play these on their own well after making it through 50 bosses. To do that, though, Travis has to train.

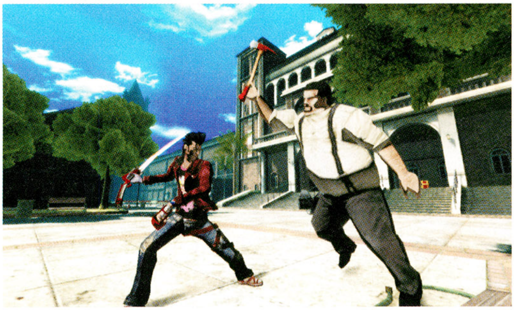
RAPID TRANSIT

Stepping outside his front door in the first game, Travis entered



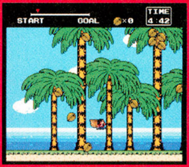


Train hard [right], and dodging this oaf [left] will be a breeze.



ODD JOBS

The first game's coconut-collecting "job" minigame is back—along with several others—but this time it's presented as if it were a classic 8-bit game. In this side-scroller, A jumps, B kicks, and Z runs. Pixel-Travis has to kick the palm trees to dislodge coconuts, which don't always fall straight down. There are only two chances to collect them: by catching them in the basket on his back as they fall or after they bounce once. If they fall on Travis, he gets squished. This slows him down, which isn't good since each stage of the minigame is timed. It gets even tougher in later stages, when there are scorpions to leap over, monkeys in the trees, and multiple coconuts falling at the same time. It's tons of fun, and we can't wait to see what's been done to retro-fy some of the other jobs.



a free-roaming Santa Destroy, which he navigated on foot or on his rocket-powered motorcycle. So it was a shock to be greeted by a top-down map of the city when heading outside in the sequel. Put simply, there is no longer an open world. Locations that Travis can travel to are highlighted (and broken down into missions, training, and jobs) and all that's needed to travel to them is to select them and press A. The game's producers say that getting rid of the open world makes it easier to get around, and that making a better open world than the first game's would have taken away from building really special levels to fight in. We're not complaining. Truthfully, it's nice to be able to hop right to a location—the open world felt like an unnecessary appendage, and Grasshopper Manufacture chose to amputate.

Before taking Travis into our first boss encounter, we zipped to the gym to strengthen up. Like the game's jobs, the gym workouts are reminiscent of 8-bit games. For strength training, we had to deal with dumbbells being tossed at us by the gym's flamboyant trainer. If he threw one high, we punched it; low, we kicked it. If he blew a kiss, we ducked it.

FASTER, SHINOBU, KILL, KILL!

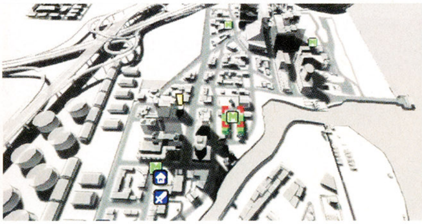
Travis isn't the only playable character in Desperate Struggle. About halfway through the game, we got to take control of Shinobu, the cold-steel-brandishing female ninja assassin from the first game. (Henry, Travis's twin brother, is another playable character.) As Shinobu, we took on foot soldiers wielding swords, clubs, and guns in a building's lobby. She's much faster than Travis, so is able to run circles around enemies but also launch into aerial attacks after double-jumping. Although playing as her doesn't make up a significant amount of the game, it's still a nice change (or quickening) of pace.

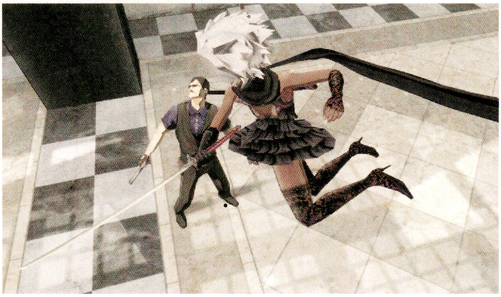
APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

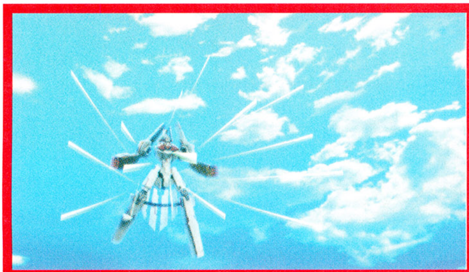
The final stop on our tour of Santa Destroy was the city's megamart. From the moment Travis steps into the parking lot, he's met with a gauntlet of adversaries ranging from unarmed punks to huge guys who look like nightclub bouncers and are as well-versed in pro-wrestling moves as Travis is.

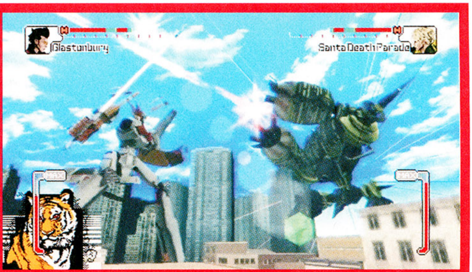
This part of our hands-on with the near-final game really showed off the work that's gone into

[Below] There's no more open world; just select where you want to go.





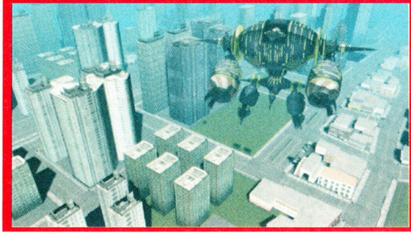


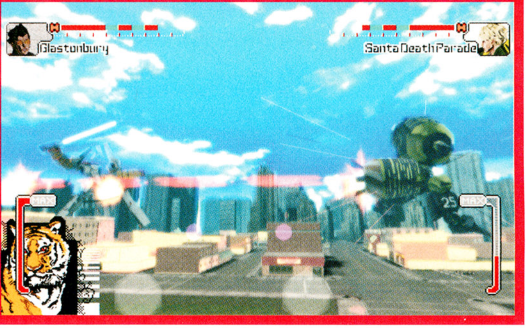


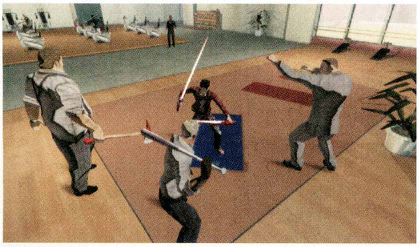
GIANT-ROBOT THROWDOWN

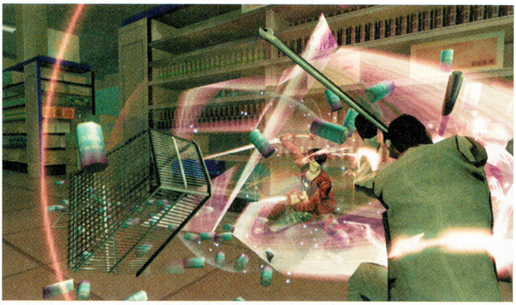
Buffed up and feeling frisky, we took Travis to the city's football stadium for a ranked battle against Charlie MacDonald, an absurdly muscular football player flanked by a dozen or so eerily synchronized cheerleaders who hang on his every word. Charlie decides the stadium wasn't a venue befitting such an epic battle, so he and his entourage rocket into low Earth orbit, joining together to form a giant linebacker robot. Seizing the opportunity to do something equally absurd, Travis hops on his motorcycle (which we're told will be used in gameplay, but exactly how remains a secret) and rockets into the belly of his own several-story-tall mech. The boss fight turns into two giant robots fighting in the middle of Santa Destroy. The same controls apply for high and low Beam Katana strikes—the key to winning this 2-D-fighting-game-style brawl is to block the MacDonald-bot's strikes and rush in for a few slashes before backing off. We were hoping to keep Travis's mech for use after the battle, but despite being "custom-made" to his specifications, it was quickly confiscated by the league organizing the assassins' ranking ladder.

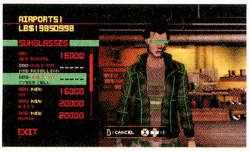
Travis's fight against MacDonald starts out in Santa Destroy and ends in space.



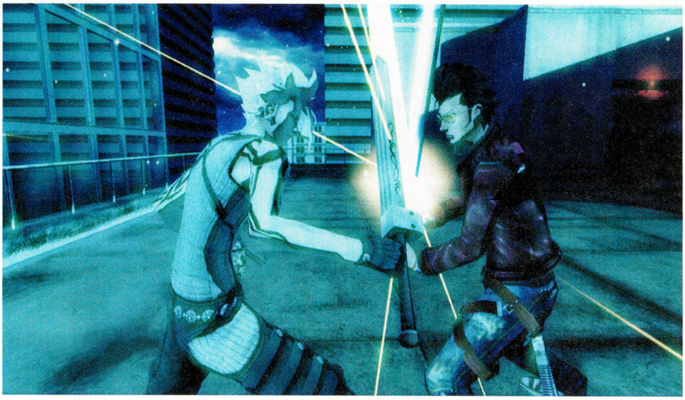








Skelter Helter [below] is Travis's first opponent.

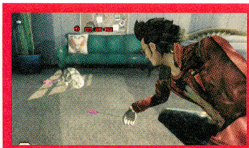


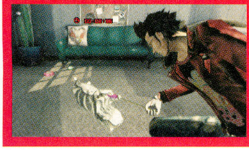
enemy AI. For starters, foes no longer attack one at a time—they gang up on Travis, and he has new automatically triggered moves for blocking when being assailed from all sides. The bad guys know when to back off and when to look for openings, and are generally more challenging than in the first game. Travis can still perform wrestling moves on them when they're dizzied, but can now pick up enemies that've been knocked to the ground and go all WWE on them, too.

The onscreen 8-bit tiger that reflects Travis's building rage is still there, and, when full, can be tapped into, making him unstoppable for a short time. But it gets crazier: Travis can now transform into a giant tiger and pounce on enemies, mauling them once they're knocked to the ground. Surreal, yes, but we'd expect nothing less from the series.

Inside the megamart Travis encounters the most powerful "standard" enemies up to that point. Armed with Beam Katanas of their own, these guys fight like minibosses, sending Travis flying into loaded shopping carts and stacks of groceries. Even though we did our best to contend with at least 10 enemies on the dairy isle—including shaking the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controller like mad for a "second wind" when seemingly down for the count—these guys mopped the floor with our wise-cracking hero. Later we learned that these are some of the game's hardest enemies, and to think our poor Travis had only that one strength workout under his belt.

Can there be a more hardcore Wii game than the original No More Heroes? Yes—and Desperate Struggle is it. This sequel is everything that made the first game such a standout—the swordplay, the art style, the over-the-top violence, the vulgarity—turned up a notch. It looks better, the combat's deeper, and the adult-themed antics would make even MadWorld blush.



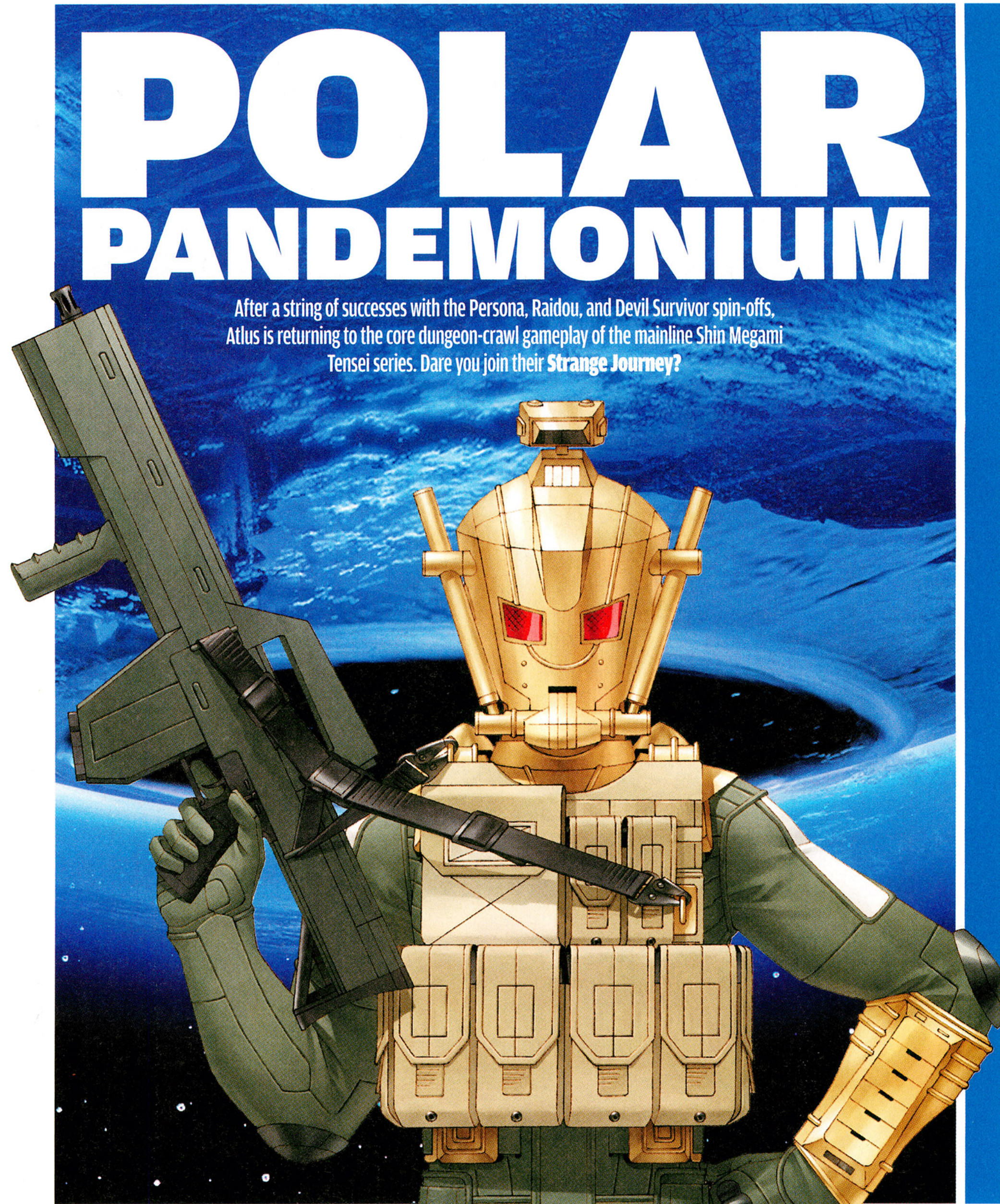


FAT CAT

Since all Travis did in the first game was feed her, his feline friend Jeane has become a bit of a cat-opotamus. As a game within the game, you have to help her lose weight, but she becomes bored *very* quickly. That being the case, you have only a few "happy cat points" to spend either playing with her (flicking a toy back and forth with the Nunchuk), stretching her by rapidly pressing the A Button to lift her off the carpet, or massaging her considerable gut by moving the Control Stick to match onscreen prompts. We did all three and she managed to shed 1/3 of a pound. It's clear that getting this cat fit is going to be a desperate struggle in and of itself.

POLAR PANDEMONIUM

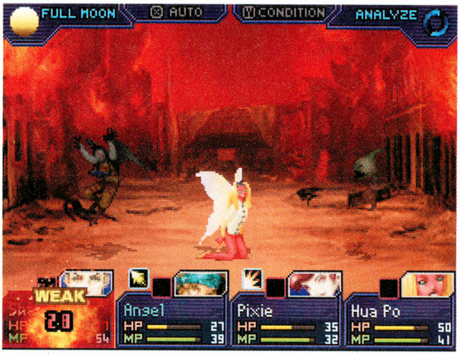
After a string of successes with the Persona, Raidou, and Devil Survivor spin-offs, Atlus is returning to the core dungeon-crawl gameplay of the mainline Shin Megami Tensei series. Dare you join their **Strange Journey?**



BY CASEY LOE

"A POWERFUL BLIZZARD has swept into the South Pole, forcing the withdrawal of personnel from manned research stations...." It's the sort of story that barely merits a mention in the evening news, and then only so the weatherman can make a corny joke about it. Little does the public know that the story is a cover-up for something truly shocking: those research stations have been wiped out entirely, swallowed by a rapidly expanding black hole known as a Schwarzwelt.

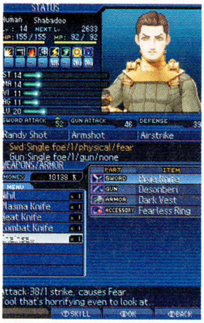
Welcome to the Schwarzwelt Joint Project, an international group of soldiers and scientists tasked with infiltrating this Antarctic void and finding a way to stop it from consuming the entire planet. No one is very optimistic about your odds of success; every unmanned probe sent into the void has been destroyed under mysterious circumstances, and what little data they managed to send back—strange photos of battlefields, shopping malls, and red-light districts—makes no sense at all. As a soldier on the project's Strike Team division, your official duty is to protect the scientists who are exploring the phenomenon. But when you arrive inside the abyss, their Bunsen burners and graduated flasks won't prove to be of much use. The mystery of the Schwarzwelt can only be solved by the blade of your sword, the muzzle of your gun, and your growing army of demon henchmen.



INTO THE ABYSS

No need to slap a spoiler alert on this one: anyone with even a passing knowledge of the Shin Megami Tensei series should have already figured out that it's demons who wait at the center of the Schwarzwelt. There are more than 300 different demons in the game, and they'll take the roles of both friend and foe during your journey. "Demons" is an expansive term in the Shin Megami Tensei universe, encompassing everything from vampires and fairies to obscure creatures from Welsh, Hindu, and Rapa Nui mythologies. Even the most familiar beasties have been rendered with the distinctly twisted visual style of the series's longtime artist and producer Kazuma Kaneko, who has a gift for adding a streak of darkness to even the purest of angels (not to mention costumes that would make a stripper blush).

When you first encounter a


STATUS

uman Shabadoo
Lv: 14 NEXT Lv 2633
HP: 155 / 155 MP: 92 / 92

ST 14
MA 14
VI 11
AG 11
LU 20

SWORD ATTACK 52 GUN ATTACK 46 DEFENSE 38

Randy Shot | Armshot | Airstrike

Swd: Single foe/1/physical/fear
Gun: Single foe/1/gun/none

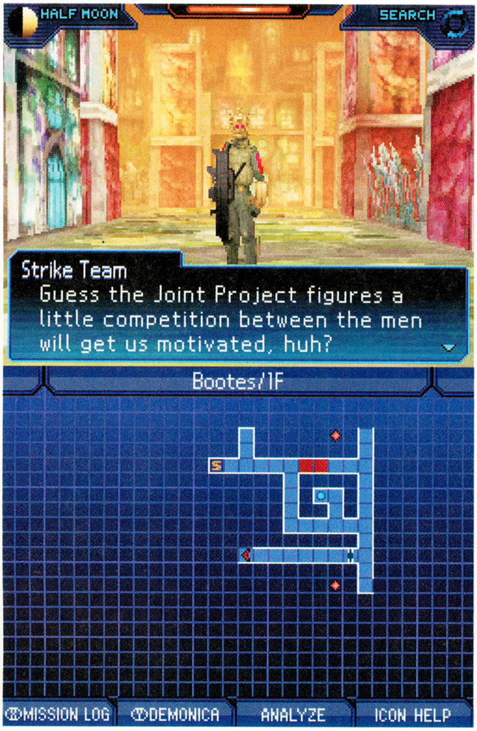
WEAPONS/ARMOR

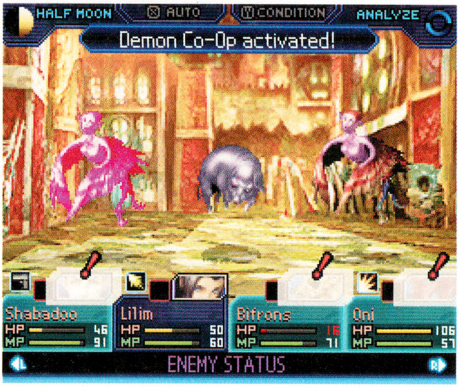
MONEY 10138

MENU
Nihil ×1
Plasma Knife ×1
Heat Knife ×1
Combat Knife ×1
Chainsaw ×1

PART	ITEM
SWORD	Pixie Knife
GUN	Desonberi
ARMOR	Dark Vest
ACCESSORY	Fearless Ring

ttack: 38/1 strike, causes Fear.
ool that's horrifying even to look at.


Strike Team
Guess the Joint Project figures a little competition between the men will get us motivated, huh?

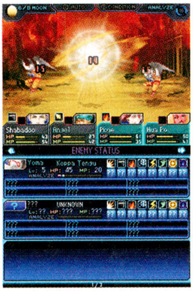

Demon Co-Op activated!

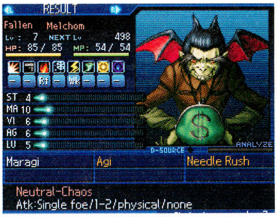
Use an attack that exploits an enemy's weakness, and allies of the same alignment will join in with a "Demon Co-op" attack.

PLATFORM NINTENDO DS | PUBLISHER ATLUS | DEVELOPER ATLUS | RELEASE MARCH 2010 demon, it appears as little more than a burst of gibberish-spouting static. But as your upgradeable DEMONICA suit collects data on the individual demons (see the sidebar "The Schwarzwelt Joint Project" for more on the suit), you'll be able to perceive their true appearances and understand their respective languages. You'll then be able to recruit them to your cause, where they'll form the bulk of your party. Your hero can have three demons by his side and five in his reserves, ready to be pulled onto the frontline when their individual mix of spells, skills, and elemental immunities are needed. When you're ready to trade up to something more powerful, you can fuse together two demons to create a new demon with a mix of its parent demons' abilities. New to this installment is the option to throw a demon "source" into the mix to grant specific abilities to the newly fused offspring. (Sources are received as a gift when demons level up, giving you even more of an incentive to recruit and use as many of the 300 demons as possible.) Although you can have only eight demons with you, you can register any demon you capture in your Demon Compendium, and then summon it again for a small cost later. You can even give your compendium pages to other players; instead of supporting wireless or Wi-Fi trading, the game will encode the demon's stats into a 32-digit password that other players can manually enter into their own compendia.

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

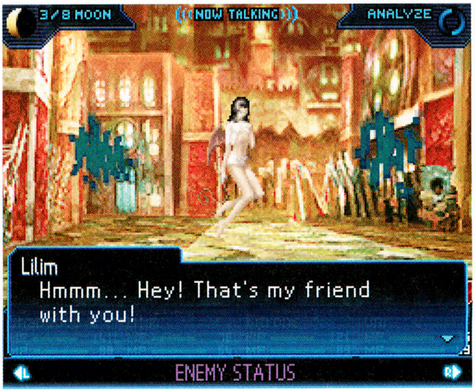
The Schwarzwelt is a series of vast first-person dungeons where you'll find friendly demons offering side quests, strange materials that can be combined into new items and equipment, and the scattered members of your team. Atlus fans should recognize the game's basic





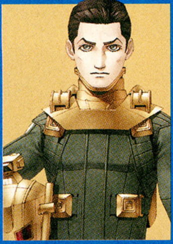
Fallen Melchom
Lv : 7 NEXT Lv 498
HP: 85/ 85 MP: 54/ 54
ST 4
MA 10
VI 6
AG 6
LU 5
Maragi Agi Needle Rush
Neutral-Chaos
Atk:Single foe/1-2/physical/none

You'll need to established a chaotic alignment for yourself if you to hope to recruit a chaotic demon like Melchom easily.



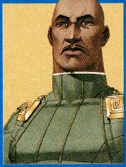
Lilim
Hmmm... Hey! That's my friend with you!

THE SCHWARZWELT JOINT PROJECT

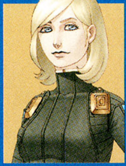


YOU As an elite soldier from [your country of origin] you've been assigned the task of providing protection and support for the scientists on the expedition. To help you survive within the Schwarzwelt, you've been equipped with a state-of-the-art DEMONICA suit (short for Demountable Next Integrated Capability Armor—a ridiculous acronym, but a fine piece of trivia with which to impress your friends). At the start of the game, the DEMONICA suit will give you a quiz about how you'd react in various battlefield situations, and assign you a class such as Attacker or Technical Support based on your answers. This one brief quiz will determine your stats throughout the entire game.

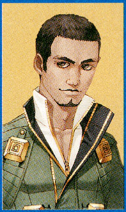
You can upgrade your DEMONICA suit with new powers that allow you to bypass onfield obstacles, uncover hidden items, and interact with demons in new ways. You can also build and equip optional modules that provide automated healing, allow you to smooth over conversational faux pas, and increase the rewards for combat. The DEMONICA suit's retro diving-suit styling may not impress the ladies at the U.N. cafeteria, but it's a pretty handy chunk of tin.



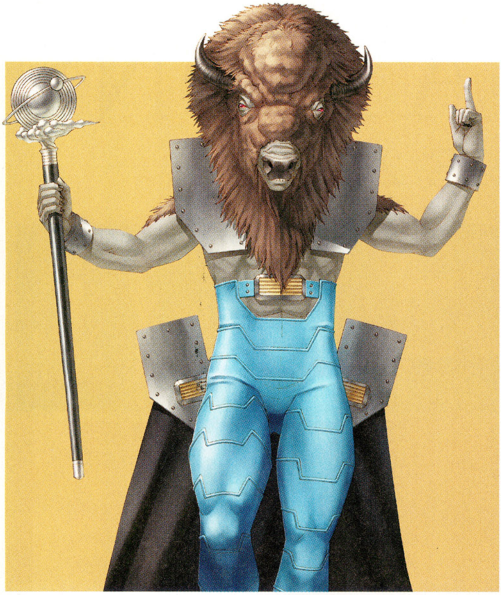
COMMANDER GORE An inspiring and resourceful leader, Commander Gore has a quick response for even the most shocking of developments that await his crew. He commands the *Red Sprite*, the first of four special vessels constructed for the expedition. Despite the uncanny resemblance, he is apparently not related to former vice president Al Gore.



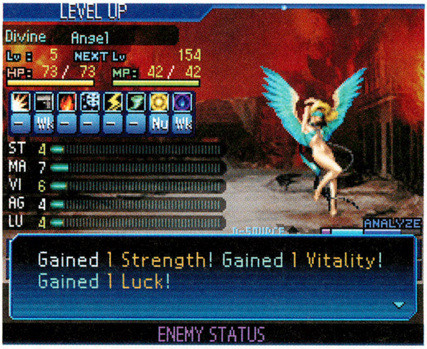
FIRST LIEUTENANT ZELENIN This top Russian physicist is at the forefront of Schwarzwelt research. She is cool and collected, essential traits for the only member of the expedition who truly understands how dangerous the Schwarzwelt is. But even her studied calm will be tested when the science vessel *Elve* is unexpectedly separated from its Strike Team guardians.



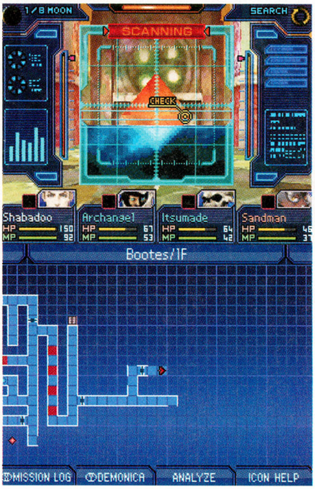
CREWMAN JIMENEZ Jimenez is an American and your colleague on the Strike Team, but that doesn't make him your friend. As he so delicately puts it, Jimenez doesn't want to get personally attached to a chump like you, so that he won't have to feel bad when you're killed. Jimenez joined the team only in anticipation of the payday that's sure to result from the expedition's successful completion.

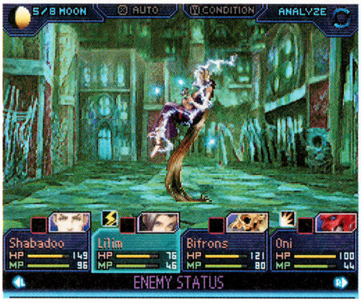


Quake in fear at the giant space buffalo of the Schwarzwelt! The other demons are a lot cooler. We promise.



Gained 1 Strength! Gained 1 Vitality! Gained 1 Luck!





engine from the Etrian Odyssey series, with the major difference being that Strange Journey features fully animated enemies and does all of the mapping for you.

While the game is constructed like a classic dungeon crawler, there's more than excellent enemy design and an engaging story separating the Shin Megami Tensei series from its peers. The biggest difference comes at the start of each random enemy encounter, when you're presented with the option to fight, flee, or have a conversation. Talking to demons isn't a gimmick, but a major pillar of Shin Megami Tensei strategy. If you can win over a demon, you can persuade it to join you or shake it down for money or items. If you already have a demon of its type in your party, the new demon will likely retreat and may even throw in a gift or heal your party. But you can never be sure exactly how a demon will react–if its friend on your roster is dead, the new demon would be just as likely to provide a free resurrection as it would to attack you for treating its comrade so poorly.

The conversation system is what makes the series so memorable, thanks in part to the expert localization skills of the Atlus translators. For example, just when I thought I had the temperamental, childlike Kaso demons figured out, I mistakenly professed a love for retro gaming and the beast became enraged because my "view of gaming" was "too narrow." Ouch. Each demon has a ton of dialogue, and the more you speak with a demon, the more you'll understand how to approach each member of its species. Once you get used to the demons of an area, you'll be able to play for extended lengths of time without ever reaching for your weapon, instead chatting amicably with every enemy you meet and receiving generous rewards of money, items, and new party members for your trouble. Needless to say, that's a lot more fun than hammering on the A Button to attack-attack-attack-attack all day long. (Although bloodthirsty players certainly have that option.)

MAY THE SCHWARZ BE WITH YOU

The Shin Megami Tensei series has scored plenty of hits with its various spin-offs, but its core series of first-person dungeon crawlers remains relatively unknown in the States. The franchise's creators hope to change that with Strange Journey, which was created with a worldwide audience in mind. That's why, for the first time in the history of the franchise, Atlus has departed from the series's familiar Tokyo setting and swapped its cast of Japanese everymen for a team of international soldiers and scientists. If infiltrating a demon-haunted abyss in the South Pole does indeed sound like more fun than helping Japanese school kids with their homework, you can join the Schwarzwelt Joint Project on March 10th, 2010. Bring a good winter coat and an extra pair of socks, but leave the retro game collection at home.

NOMINATIONS

FOR THE 2009

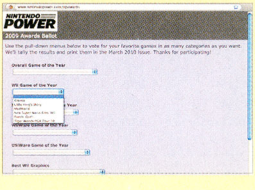
NINTENDO POWER AWARDS!

What a year it was! 2009 saw the release of major new installments to longtime franchises as well as breakthrough original games that pushed the boundaries of our favorite systems. To help decide which titles are recognized as the best of the best, simply fill out the ballot to the right and then go online to cast your votes at www.nintendopower.com/npawards. Remember, every vote counts!

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Peruse the categories, contemplate your choices, and mark up the list. You'll use it to refer to your picks when you pull the virtual lever online, and keep it as a record of how you voted. Number 2 pencil not required!

2. Go online and vote at the following URL: www.nintendopower.com/npawards



2009 Awards Ballot

Use the pull-down menus below to vote for your favorite games in as many categories as you want. We'll tally the results and print them in the March 2010 issue. Thanks for participating!

Overall Game of the Year

Wii Game of the Year

WiiWare Game of the Year

DSiWare Game of the Year

Best Wii Graphics

3. Pick up a copy of our March issue and see the results!

THE 2009 NINTENDO POWER AWARDS OFFICIAL BALLOT

PICK ONE

OVERALL GAME OF THE YEAR

○ ◀ Art Style: Precipice (DW)
○ ◀ Cave Story (WW)
○ ◀ Contra ReBirth (WW)
○ ◀ Dragon Quest Wars (DW)
○ ◀ Final Fantasy IV: The After Years (WW)
○ ◀ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS)
○ ◀ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)
○ ◀ Klonoa (Wii)
○ ◀ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)
○ ◀ Little King's Story (Wii)
○ ◀ Lost Winds: Winter of the Melodias (WW)
○ ◀ MadWorld (Wii)
○ ◀ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS)
○ ◀ Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again (DW)
○ ◀ Mighty Flip Champs! (DW)
○ ◀ New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)
○ ◀ NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits (WW)
○ ◀ Punch-Out!! (Wii)
○ ◀ Puzzle League Express (DW)
○ ◀ Rhythm Heaven (DS)
○ ◀ Scribblenauts (DS)
○ ◀ Tales of Monkey Island (WW)
○ ◀ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii)

PICK ONE

Wii GAME OF THE YEAR

○ ◀ Klonoa
○ ◀ Little King's Story
○ ◀ MadWorld
○ ◀ New Super Mario Bros. Wii
○ ◀ Punch-Out!!
○ ◀ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10

PICK ONE

NINTENDO DS GAME OF THE YEAR

○ ◀ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
○ ◀ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days
○ ◀ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks
○ ◀ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
○ ◀ Rhythm Heaven
○ ◀ Scribblenauts

KEY

DS = Nintendo DS
DW = DSiWare
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

PICK ONE

WiiWARE GAME OF THE YEAR

○ ◀ Cave Story
○ ◀ Contra ReBirth
○ ◀ Final Fantasy IV: The After Years
○ ◀ Lost Winds: Winter of the Melodias
○ ◀ NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits
○ ◀ Tales of Monkey Island

PICK ONE

DSiWARE GAME OF THE YEAR

○ ◀ Art Style: Precipice
○ ◀ Dragon Quest Wars
○ ◀ Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again
○ ◀ Mighty Flip Champs!
○ ◀ Puzzle League Express

PICK ONE

BEST Wii GRAPHICS

○ ◀ A Boy and His Blob
○ ◀ Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers
○ ◀ MadWorld
○ ◀ Muramasa: The Demon Blade
○ ◀ Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles
○ ◀ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

PICK ONE

BEST NINTENDO DS GRAPHICS

○ ◀ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
○ ◀ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days
○ ◀ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks
○ ◀ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
○ ◀ Naruto Shippuden Ninja Destiny 2
○ ◀ Phantasy Star 0

PICK ONE

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

○ ◀ Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)
○ ◀ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)
○ ◀ Little King's Story (Wii)
○ ◀ Rhythm Heaven (DS)
○ ◀ Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS)
○ ◀ Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii)

PICK ONE

BEST SOUND/ VOICE ACTING

○ ◀ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex (Wii)
○ ◀ Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
○ ◀ Ghostbusters: The Video Game (Wii)
○ ◀ The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)
○ ◀ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)
○ ◀ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)

PICK ONE

BEST MUSIC/ RHYTHM GAME

○ ◀ The Beatles: Rock Band (Wii)
○ ◀ DJ Hero (Wii)
○ ◀ Guitar Hero 5 (Wii)
○ ◀ Rhythm Heaven (DS)

PICK ONE

BEST ADVENTURE GAME

○ ◀ Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers (Wii)
○ ◀ Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars (DS)
○ ◀ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)
○ ◀ The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)
○ ◀ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)
○ ◀ Tales of Monkey Island (WW)

PICK ONE

BEST RPG

○ ◀ Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)
○ ◀ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS)
○ ◀ Phantasy Star 0 (DS)
○ ◀ Pokémon Platinum Version (DS)
○ ◀ Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor (DS)
○ ◀ Suikoden: Tierkreis (DS)

PICK ONE

BEST STRATEGY GAME

○ ◀ Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon (DS)
○ ◀ Knights in the Nightmare (DS)
○ ◀ Little King's Story (Wii)
○ ◀ Phantom Brave: We Meet Again (Wii)
○ ◀ Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume (DS)

PICK ONE

BEST SHOOTER

○ ◀ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex (Wii)
○ ◀ The Conduit (Wii)
○ ◀ Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
○ ◀ The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)
○ ◀ Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles (Wii)

PICK ONE

BEST SPORTS GAME

○ ◀ Madden NFL 10 (Wii)
○ ◀ Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games (DS)
○ ◀ NHL 2K10 (Wii)
○ ◀ Punch-Out!! (Wii)
○ ◀ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 (Wii)
○ ◀ Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

PICK ONE

BEST ACTION GAME

○ ◀ Contra ReBirth (WW)
○ ◀ Gradius ReBirth (WW)
○ ◀ MadWorld (Wii)
○ ◀ Muramasa: The Demon Blade (Wii)
○ ◀ Sonic and the Black Knight (Wii)

PICK ONE

BEST PLATFORMER

○ ◀ A Boy and His Blob (Wii)
○ ◀ Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS)
○ ◀ Klonoa (Wii)
○ ◀ Lost Winds: Winter of the Melodias (WW)
○ ◀ New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)
○ ◀ NyxQuest: Kindred Spirits (WW)

PICK ONE

BEST PUZZLE GAME

○ ◀ Art Style: Precipice (DW)
○ ◀ Boom Blox Bash Party (Wii)
○ ◀ Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes (DS)
○ ◀ Peggle: Dual Shot (DS)
○ ◀ Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box (DS)
○ ◀ Scribblenauts (DS)

PICK ONE

BEST NEW CHARACTER

○ ◀ Henry Hatsworth - Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (DS)
○ ◀ Jack - MadWorld (Wii)
○ ◀ Lexine - Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
○ ◀ Little King - Little King's Story (Wii)
○ ◀ Morgan LeFlay - Tales of Monkey Island (WW)
○ ◀ Xion - Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)

PICK ONE

BEST MULTIPLAYER

○ ◀ Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex (Wii)
○ ◀ The Conduit (Wii)
○ ◀ Guitar Hero 5 (Wii)
○ ◀ New Super Mario Bros. Wii (Wii)
○ ◀ Phantasy Star 0 (DS)
○ ◀ Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

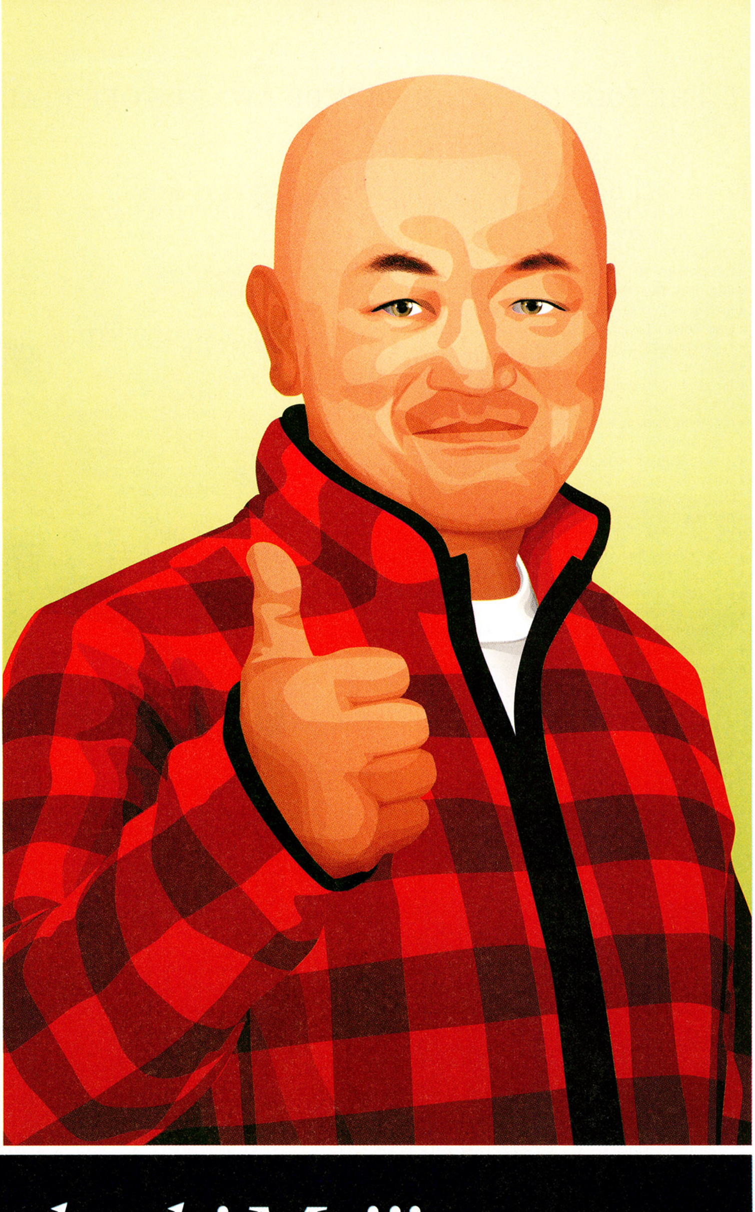
PICK ONE

BEST STORY/ WRITING

○ ◀ Dead Space Extraction (Wii)
○ ◀ Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride (DS)
○ ◀ The House of the Dead: Overkill (Wii)
○ ◀ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days (DS)
○ ◀ Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS)
○ ◀ Silent Hill: Shattered Memories (Wii)

35

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
May 23, 1959

BIRTHPLACE
Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan

POSITION
Game Master, Publicity Section, Hudson Soft

BEST KNOWN FOR
Firing 16 shots per second, riding through the jungle on a skateboard while throwing hammers at wildlife

FAVORITE FOOD
Fruits, lamb, and salmon

CURRENT PROJECTS
Any and all Hudson titles

Takahashi Meijin

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Power Profiles is usually the place where you can find insights into and in-depth information about some of the world's top game developers. But Toshiyuki Takahashi—better known as Takahashi Meijin—doesn't actually create video games; he's most famous for playing them. A longtime member of the marketing and public-relations team at Hudson Soft, Takahashi Meijin rose to prominence in Japan in the '80s and became something of a celebrity for his exceptional game-playing skills (*meijin* is an honorary title that means *master*) and his ability to fire a remarkable 16 shots per second in the classic NES shooter Star Force. Takahashi even became the basis for the main character in Hudson's long-running Adventure Island platforming series. (The character is named Master Higgins in North America.) Takahashi Meijin might not play as many games now as he once did, but he still helps players revel in the fun of gaming wherever he goes.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you first become involved in the video game industry?

TAKAHASHI MEIJIN
I was working at a supermarket in the produce department, and I was in charge of going over the invoices. And that's when computers first came out, and I realized that if I used a computer that I would be able to effectively organize invoices. So I went and bought a computer myself, and I started doing programming. And I realized how much fun it was, and so I started looking for anything and everything [computer-related]. And at that time Hudson was hiring, and not really knowing what the job was about, I just went and knocked on their door and asked for a job. I bought a magazine that had a Hudson advertisement on it. It wasn't even actually a job/employment section; it was just that they were advertising their PC game in a magazine. I saw that the corporate office was in Hokkaido, which is a northern island of Japan; most of the companies that had anything to do with computers were all located in Tokyo, [on] the main island. And at that time I was in Hokkaido, and I thought it was kind of like fate, you know? It's like the only [computer-related] company I happened to come across...that happened to be based in Hokkaido. So I grabbed that magazine and literally walked over to the office and just knocked on their door and said, "Can I have a job?"

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Everything that I really wanted to be [was something] that I would now call big and unrealistic. Within that unlimited range of imagination, the event that impacted me most was the *Apollo 11* landing on the moon back in 1969. I was 10 at the time, and I saw the whole thing live—we watched it in elementary school. Ever since witnessing that, I've wanted to go to space. Now that I think about it, looking at all those switches and gadgets in the ship, that's where I got my button fetish.

What were you doing when you first started at Hudson?

When I first went in, I basically said I would do whatever. It doesn't matter. Whatever. So they put me in the sales department, and then for a year I worked as part of the sales team, and from that point on they saw sort of a marketing possibility in my personality, so that's when they put me in the marketing group. That was when I was 23.

Were you actually a gamer when you started there or did that happen afterwards?

No, at that time I was only playing very little. July 1983 is when Nintendo came out with the [Famicom, the Japanese equivalent of the] NES. And Hudson's president went and bought the system and brought it to the office in September, and said, "Hey, why don't we make a game for this console?" The very first game that we created was called Lode Runner, and because as a marketing person I wanted to really be able to communicate why this game is so great, and the joy of that particular game, I went and practiced a lot...and that was sort of the dawn of realizing how much I loved video games.

Were you naturally good from when you first started playing, or did it take a lot of practice?

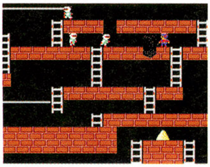
When you are playing a video game, normally you don't talk. You are just concentrating on what you're doing. But my playing had to do with advertisement and promotion, so I had to practice playing well and talking at the same time, about something maybe completely different from exactly what I was doing. And it is really hard! So I practiced to a point where I didn't have to think about the playing so that I could concentrate on what I'm saying, and everything became kind of habitual, in that my fingers just kind of moved without thinking about it. And I think that was sort of the first step—my body just naturally reacting to those movements.

How did you earn the

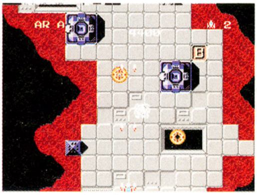
> *"...everything became kind of habitual, in that my fingers just kind of moved without thinking about it."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

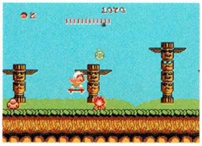
Takahashi Meijin is rarely involved with actual game development, but he's helped promote and market more than 140 titles over the years. The following are some of the standouts he's been associated with.



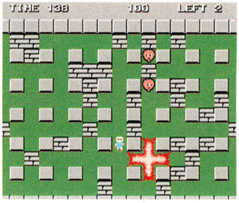
LODE RUNNER
1987, NES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, GAME MANUAL, STRATEGY GUIDE, DEBUGGING



STAR FORCE
1987, NES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, DEBUGGING



ADVENTURE ISLAND
1988, NES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, STRATEGY GUIDE, HERO



BOMBERMAN
1989, NES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, DEBUGGING

Power Profiles

title of *meijin*?
In 1985, Hudson hosted this nationwide video game championship, and I worked as an instructor to all the kids and the game players. That's when Hudson granted me the title as the master.

And then how did you become the basis of the hero from Adventure Island?
In 1986 when Hudson was going to adapt the game Wonder Boy for the NES, the vice president and I started working on the concept in the room, and then the vice president sort of out of the blue said, "Well, you know, you are a very popular figure right now. Your name is really well known. So we feel like we'll take the same concept of the game, but then we'll give you the character within that game. That can be your game." That's really where it started.

Do you ever actually skateboard?
No. In fact, there was a companywide policy banning anybody from skateboarding, because my "magic fingers" were sort of what signified *meijin*. So the company was afraid that if I actually skateboarded, that I could hurt myself and they couldn't have that. So they said in private that I couldn't skateboard, and they also forbade any programmers from getting on the skateboard, since one of them actually fell and broke his wrist and couldn't program for a while. So if the programmers and I couldn't skateboard, well, nobody could skateboard, so they just kind of banned it across the board.

What about a grass skirt? Do you ever wear a grass skirt?
No! Back then, luckily, we didn't do a whole lot of media events like that, so they didn't make me dress up, but I think if it happened now, I definitely would have got dressed up like that. Actually, I've never done it in Japan, but in the '90s when I came to E3, I dressed up as that character.

Which Adventure Island game is your favorite?
I would have to say it's the first NES version. All the ones after that inherit the basic attributes properly, but the finer points of the fun factor and the difficulty are best portrayed here. It also has to do with the fact that this one was the very first title with me as the main character, so it holds an exceptional place in my heart.

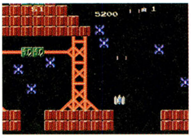
Would it be accurate to say that part of your job involved being paid to play every game that Hudson made?
It was a great experience, and as much as I like to say it was literally like playing games while getting paid, it wasn't so simple. Every time I played a game, I was coming from the perspective of how can I best show off this game, and how can I still play well, but then also be able to speak at the same time, so most of the time I didn't get to play it as if I was just another consumer, simply enjoying it as is.

Probably the most nerve-wracking experience as part of that promotion was that in Japanese TV, a lot of [the shows] are live, and they'd only give us a two- or three-minute segment, and they all want me to play, because they want to see me play well, and you could never screw it up, because it's live and you get one take and you have so little time. Every time I went on I was so nervous that I'd screw it up!

> *"It was a great experience, and as much as I like to say it was literally like playing games while getting paid, it wasn't so simple."*

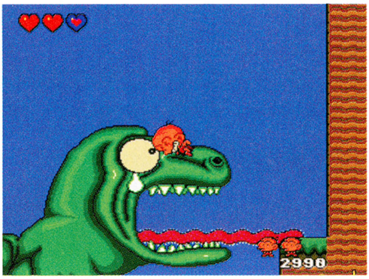
What's an average day like for you at your job now?
I would say the only thing that is ever consistent on a day-to-day basis is that from the time I leave my house until the time I get to my company, I write one blog [post]. And then from the time I leave the company until I get home, I write another blog [post]. What's in between is never the same. For instance, I'm about to go into a recording studio, because I'm recording a lot of songs for the games and whatnot, and so obviously I have a lot of press junkets with that album. Sometimes it's an interview, sometimes

GAMEOGRAPHY



STAR SOLDIER
1989, NES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, GAME MANUAL, FILM APPEARANCE

MILITARY MADNESS
1989, TURBOGRAFX16
PUBLIC RELATIONS, GAME MANUAL



BONK'S ADVENTURE
1990, TURBOGRAFX16
PUBLIC RELATIONS, GAME MANUAL

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND
1992, SUPER NES
PUBLIC RELATIONS, GAME MANUAL, HERO

it's a meeting. So I don't really have an ordinary schedule.

Wait—you're a singer?
Yeah. I have published about five or six albums already. You know the opening to Adventure Island? [singing in Japanese] That's my song.

"We want to be a positive influence on kids. We've always been about creating games for the kids."

You've been with Hudson for 27 years. How have things changed in the video game industry since you've been involved with it?
Aside from the obvious, which is the advancement of technology, the consoles have gone through a tremendous amount of transformation, and a lot of it is great, because now you can add so much, and coming from a developer's point of view, that's a wonderful thing, because it really allows you enough creative freedom to be able to add a lot of features and whatnot. Although contentwise, I am a little bit saddened by a lot of the games that involve violence. It is a person killing or hurting another—in countless amounts, if I may add—and that isn't really in sync with where Hudson has been and where Hudson is going. And even in an out-of-the-box, edgier game for Hudson, like Calling, we made a conscious decision to not be able to attack the ghosts. Even though it's a ghost, we didn't want you to be able to get aggressive toward another being...and that is a very important element of what Hudson is all about, because we want to be a positive influence on kids. We've always been about creating games for the kids, for them to be able to enjoy. So, again, the consoles are great, the technology's wonderful, but I am saddened to see the shift in the tone of where the content is going.

And is there anything that you feel has especially changed at Hudson in the last 27 years?
One of the biggest transformations within came about at Hudson in 2001 when we merged with Konami. And to be quite frank, up until 2001, the net revenue for Hudson was declining, and when we merged with Konami, Konami provided us with a new direction, a new strategy, and it was good in terms of pushing the sales. We were quite happy with that until a couple of years ago, when we realized that when we were chasing just the number—and numbers are great, and we still need to keep that in mind—but we realized that we were starting to turn out games that we weren't all that passionate about anyway, and that started to show within our products. So we had a realization for a second time, about two or three years ago, and that is starting to change the direction where Hudson is going for the next couple of years. And I suspect that next year you'll be able to see the fruit of those couple of years' worth of that change in attitude.

Is that where titles like Calling and Lost in Shadow came from?
There's not one direction that I can say this new attitude would bring about; this new environment is creating [an opportunity] for a director like Mr. Shimizu to say, "Hey, this is what I want to make. This is what I want to do." And for corporate to say, "OK, we'll back you up." So it really is up to each individual director in terms of what they are interested in. If they are interested in reviving something like a Bomberman or things like that, that is where Hudson will go, if, in fact, [a] director sees that that is where he wants to take his next project.

What other games or game creators do you admire or respect?
Dragon Quest.

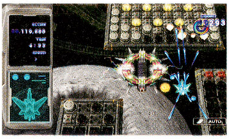
What are your favorite nongaming hobbies or pastimes?
Motorcycle. In the summer I went and took a motorcycle trip. In eight days I went about 2,000 miles.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I find it extremely admirable when I find a film that pulls you into the story, making you laugh and cry within that timeline. I personally love movies that are simply fun to watch, so there are tons of titles out there now. To give a few, a film not so technological but superior in use of sound like *Jaws* and *Alien* are some of my favorites, as well as documentarylike reenactments like *Apollo 13*.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I would like to be able to revive my 16 shots per second for real. Because I'm 50, and right now I [can fire] only 12 or 13 shots [per second], and I'd like to get it back to 16.

BOMBERMAN 64
1997, NINTENDO 64
PUBLIC RELATIONS

FISHING MASTER
2007, Wii
PUBLIC RELATIONS, ENDING THEME SONG



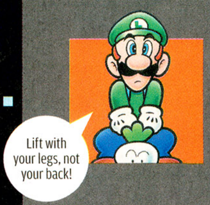
STAR SOLDIER R
2008, WiiWARE
PUBLIC RELATIONS

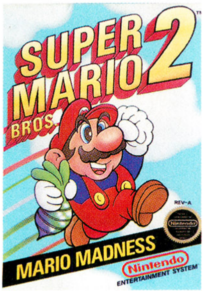
CALLING
2010, Wii
PUBLIC RELATIONS

PLAY BACK

REVISITING THE CLASSICS

1980 1985 1988 1990 1995 2000

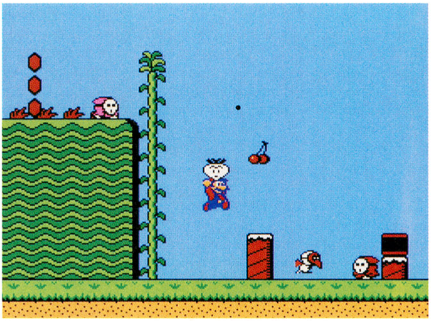

Lift with your legs, not your back!



PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 1988**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8**
NUMBER OF NORTH AMERICAN REMAKES/ RERELEASES: **3**

Super Mario Bros. 2

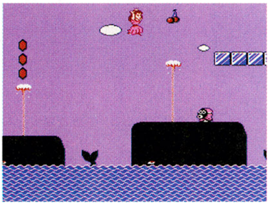
Even when they're doing things differently, you can't go wrong with Mario and company.



Remember, kids: If you don't eat your vegetables, Mario will hunt you down and throw them right at your face.

It's common knowledge that the game America knows as Super Mario Bros. 2 wasn't the original Super Mario Bros. 2. While Japan got a Mario sequel that was a lot like the first SMB—albeit much, much more difficult—America received a Mario-enhanced version of a game that was called Doki Doki Panic in Japan and originally had nothing to do with the famous bros. But what often gets lost in the discussion is that even though Super Mario Bros. 2 might not have technically been a "true" Mario game, it was nonetheless a really good one.

From the get-go it was easy to see that Super Mario Bros. 2 wasn't cut from the same cloth as its predecessor. There were no Goombas, no Koopas, no green pipes, and no blocks to smash. Coins and Super Mushrooms were found only when you temporarily warped into an alternate realm called Sub-Space, and when you jumped on enemies, they didn't get squashed—instead, you could stand on them! Standing on enemies was integral to the gameplay; after jumping on them, you could pick them up and chuck them at other bad guys. The levels were full of other stuff to grab, too—mostly vegetables that you could uproot and hurl at your foes. The grab-'n'-toss action was very unlike what players had come to expect from Mario, but it was fun and addictive, and it made the experience feel completely fresh.



Though the gameplay was decidedly different, the characters were welcomely familiar. Luigi, Princess Peach, and Toad all joined Mario as playable heroes, and each offered different levels of strength (which determined how fast you could pick up an object) and jumping ability. Luigi could jump the highest, Toad was the strongest, Peach could float, and Mario was the most balanced. The different abilities often came in handy as you traversed the game's 20 levels (spread across seven worlds); Toad's fast digging was especially useful in the desert worlds, for example. Other Mario elements worked their way in, as well, such as Koopa shells, POW Blocks, and 1-Up Mushrooms. On the flipside, some aspects of the game that weren't originally part of the Mario universe—Bob-ombs, Shy Guys, and Birdo, to name a few—have since become Mario mainstays.

Despite Super Mario Bros. 2's unusual origins, the game stands as one of the best titles released on the NES, and it holds up well more than 20 years later. If you want to see for yourself what makes the game so special, you can download it now on the Wii system's Virtual Console. —**CHRIS H.**

WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED

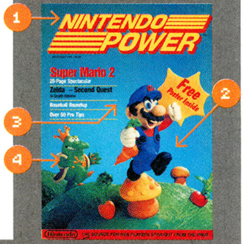
Super Mario Bros. 2 was a landmark title in many ways. One of its claims to fame is that it was the cover story of the very first issue of Nintendo Power.

1 LOVE THAT LOGO Note the original red-and-yellow Nintendo Power logo. It was used through Volume 67 (December 1994), after which it was replaced with a 3-D-style version of the logo.

2 THEY MADE IT OUT OF CLAY Instead of hand-drawn artwork or CG renders, many of the early issues of Nintendo Power featured photographed covers—in this case, a photo of a custom-made clay diorama.

3 GOT THE BLUES For some reason Mario's hat was molded in blue instead of its usual red. Shame on you, quality control from 21 years ago!

4 CALLING DR. SCHOLL Bowser didn't appear in SMB2; the lead villain was instead a froglike creature named Wart. Unlike Bowser, Wart has languished in obscurity since his defeat by the bros.



HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS.

89 STICKERS × 1 CALENDAR + 12 POSTERS =

NINTENDO POWER 2010 CALENDAR

NINTENDO POWER COLLECTOR'S SPECIAL

FEBRUARY'S CLASSIC NINTENDO MOMENT: Raccoon Mario takes flight in Super Mario Bros. 3.

AN UNBEATABLE PACKAGE:

- A 16-MONTH CALENDAR FEATURING CLASSIC NINTENDO GAME SCENES and TRIVIA
- 89 STICKERS to CUSTOMIZE YOUR CALENDAR
- POSTERS for EVERY MONTH of the YEAR!

TURN the PAGE TO SEE MORE

NINTENDO POWER SPECIAL ISSUE

$9.99US

Future MEDIA WITH PASSION

ON SALE NOW

Only at newsstands!

Your quest for the best wall calendar is over!

Nintendo properties are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2009 Nintendo.

NINTENDO POWER®

GET THE BEST AND MOST NINTENDO COVERAGE DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR!

NEW ZELDA! Drive a train and command enemies in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks for Nintendo DS!
NINTENDO POWER
RED STEEL 2
FINALLY, wielding a sword in a Wii game feels as real as you'd always dreamed!
MARIO & SONIC TOGETHER AGAIN!
PUNCH-OUT!! BLOWOUT
Wii
Punch-Out!!
RESIDENT EVIL RETURNS TO Wii
BOOM BLOX: BASH PARTY
AGENTS of CHANGE
DEFENDING the TITLE

Check out **NintendoPower.com** for a sneak peek at the latest issue!

You can also subscribe, renew or give a gift at the click of a button!

SUBSCRIBE NOW – 12 ISSUES FOR ONLY $19.95

THAT'S 72% SAVINGS!

visit **www.nintendopower.com/replynow**

Game trademarks and copyrights are properties of their respective owners. Nintendo properties are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2009 Nintendo.

REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

IN THIS SECTION

Wii REVIEWS

AVATAR: THE GAME 88

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: THE CRYSTAL BEARERS 86

JAMBO! SAFARI 89

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010 89

THE SKY CRAWLERS: INNOCENT ACES 87

NINTENDO DS REVIEWS

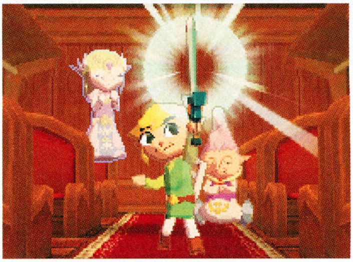
ASSASSIN'S CREED II: DISCOVERY 89

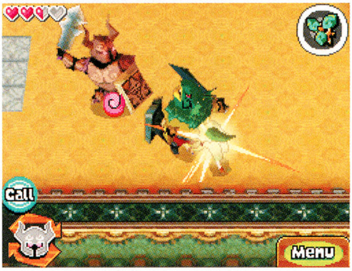
AVATAR: THE GAME 87

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS 82

SANDS OF DESTRUCTION 89

Does Spirit Tracks deliver classic Zelda goodness to DS? (Prepare *not* to be shocked!)





High Spirits

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SPIRIT TRACKS

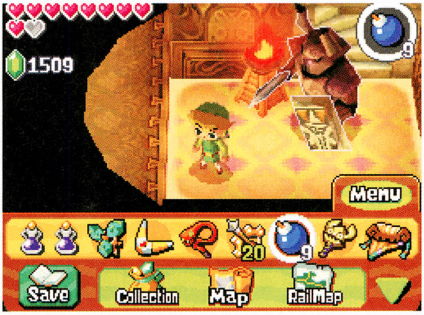
RATING: 9.5

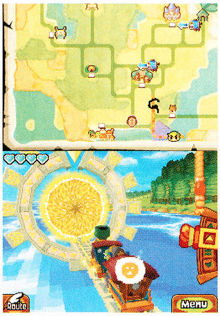
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

The latest entry in Nintendo's fabled franchise is a lot of things: a direct sequel to the 2007 hit Phantom Hourglass, a deep and diverse adventure, and a mix of bold new ideas and tried-and-true Zelda concepts. But most importantly, The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks might just be the year's best Nintendo DS game.

Although the game's graphics, stylus-exclusive controls, and general structure are lifted directly from Phantom Hourglass, Spirit Tracks outshines its DS predecessor in every way. Phantom Hourglass was a great overall game, but the need to constantly revisit its central dungeon—the Temple of the Ocean King—resulted in a lot of boring backtracking. Also, traveling—by boat, as in The Wind Waker, though less tedious than in that game—was still a lull between the fun times on land.

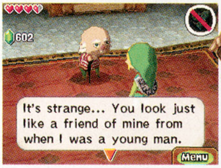
Instead of dropping those two questionable features altogether, Spirit Tracks for the most part fixes their flaws. This time the various levels of the central dungeon-type location—the Tower of Spirits—can be skipped once cleared, which means that you can look forward to return trips without the dread of having to redo much of your earlier work. And while traveling is still the least compelling part of the adventure, I found the train to be more interactive, more endearing, and less wearisome than sailing. There's a nice little bit of strategy in plotting the safest and most direct route to your destination, and you are regularly called upon to switch tracks, fire upon attackers, carry passengers, and more. There is also a simple kind of satisfaction in using trackside rocks for target practice, and in tugging the onscreen rope to blow the train's whistle (which even figures into some puzzles). Overall, chugging along in Link's choo-choo is fairly fun. It pales in comparison to exploring a new town or delving into a dungeon, but provides a fresh break



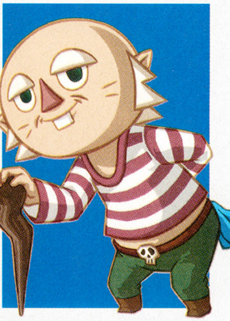


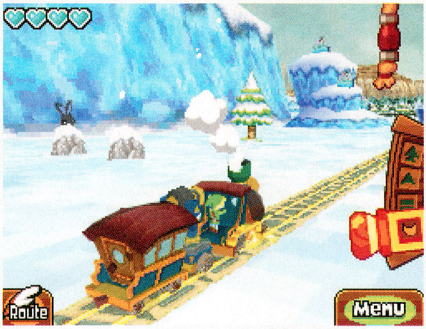
Links to the Past

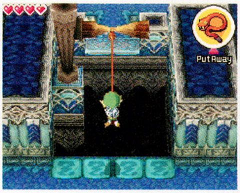
The Zelda series is somewhat famous for not always having a clear chronology, but Spirit Tracks goes out of its way to drive home the fact that it's a direct sequel to Phantom Hourglass. The story takes place in a new land that (Phantom Hourglass spoiler alert!) Link and Tetra found at the end of the previous game. And although Spirit Tracks takes place 100 years later, you'll even come across a few familiar faces.



It's strange... You look just like a friend of mine from when I was a young man.







between those more traditional Zelda elements.

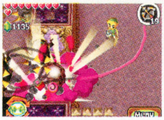
Riding the rails also makes Spirit Tracks one of the most linear Zelda adventures to date. Since you can stop the train at only predetermined locations, you never explore the wilderness on foot. This is a contrast to the series's console installments, in which you can usually walk across every square inch of countryside and rifle through each shrub in hopes of uncovering the next deviously hidden secret. Even Phantom Hourglass allowed you to take any path you want across the sea. At first glance this new approach may seem to diminish that classic Zelda spirit of discovery, but there are still plenty of secrets to uncover among Hyrule's many locations. Plus, the segmented structure of the world is a good fit for handheld gaming, as it provides clearly defined chunks of gameplay that can be tackled via shorter on-the-go sessions.

The train isn't the game's only signature addition: for the first time, Princess Zelda joins Link for the entirety of his quest. I really enjoyed having her along; she's a bit spunkier than normal and can be pretty funny, and the quest to return her ghostly form to its stolen body made me care about the eventual duel against an otherwise-forgettable main villain. Link and Zelda form a bond throughout the course of their adventure that gives the game heart. I was therefore disappointed that Zelda's presence—along with the progression of the main plot—is

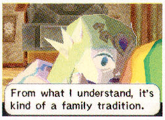
The Many Sides of Zelda

After spending so much quality time with Zelda, it was fun to discover that she's more than just a pampered princess.

ROYAL ZELDA
Regal and reserved, Zelda conducts official duties such as confirming new engineers and then inviting them to secret meetings in her quarters.



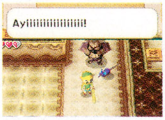
BADASS ZELDA
From battling baddies to bowling over them, the princess deals a lot of damage.



From what I understand, it's kind of a family tradition.

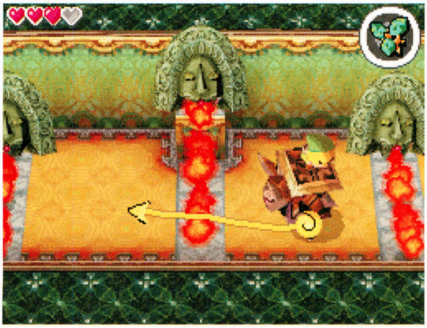
FUNNY ZELDA
After ordering Link to complete a dangerous task alone, she explains, "I will wait for you here. That's what princesses have always done. From what I understand, it's kind of a family tradition."

BFF ZELDA
She sticks with Link through thick and thin and keeps him going with pep talks and high fives.



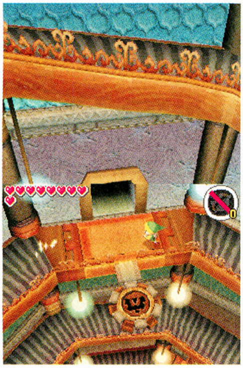
Ayiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!

GIRLY ZELDA
Even as a ghost in unstoppable armor, Zelda freezes in terror at the sight of a mouse.



Master of the Pan Flute

The Spirit Flute is my new favorite Zelda instrument. You can blow into the microphone to perform preset tunes that can reveal hidden objects, heal Link, and more, or you can simply work out how to play your favorite songs on what is essentially a real working instrument.



[Above left] A flameproof friend and piggyback rides come in handy. [Lower left] You can thankfully bypass completed tower floors.

greatly diminished during the middle part of the game. The story starts strong and the multifaceted climax is fantastic, which makes me wish even more that the narrative were stronger throughout.

Story concerns aside, Zelda's biggest contribution to Spirit Tracks comes in the form of the new co-op stages that take place inside the Tower of Spirits. These multifloored missions largely resemble traditional Zelda dungeon exploration, but are built around brand-new kinds of puzzles that can be solved only through strategic use of both Link and Zelda, the latter of whom operates by possessing the hulking armored Phantoms that made life so hard for Link in Phantom Hourglass. You can set her to walk behind you or draw a path for her to follow. Zelda's new form gives her an impressive number of extra abilities to work into your puzzle solving: she is invulnerable to jets of flame, can walk through lava and across spikes, can carry some items, and can give Link a piggyback ride. And depending on the Phantom she inhabits, she also teleports, lights torches, or rolls around like a wrecking ball. There are interesting limitations, too: her heavy armor sinks in sand, and

11/10/09
/10/09

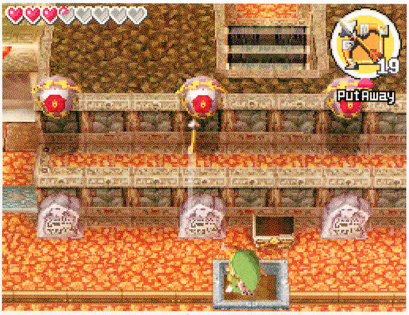
Of course!

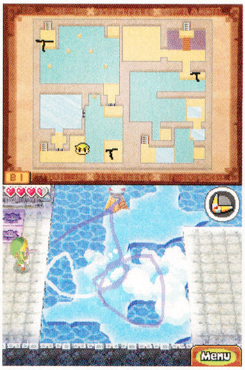
Hmm...

Are you SURE you want to frolic with the bunnies?

Friends in Need

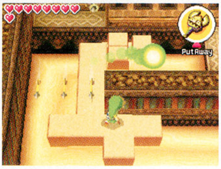
From transporting people and cargo to collecting stamps and bunnies, there are plenty of errands and hobbies to help max out your time with Spirit Tracks. Doing favors usually earns you a Heart Container or adds optional tracks to the map, but there are some surprise prizes, too. My only gripe is that these side quests usually take a long time to complete and require a lot of backtracking, which makes for tedious traveling. Here's a tip: wait until you've found lots of warp gates.





[Right] An icy boomerang freezes any water in its path.

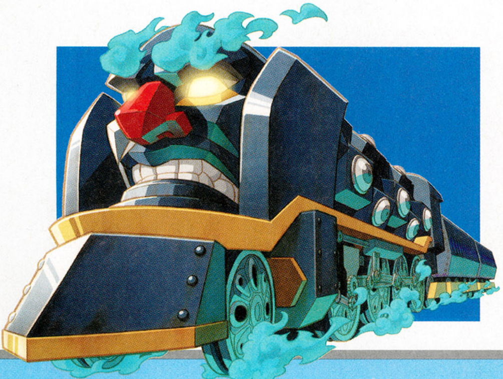
What can I interest you in? Just tap whatever catches your eye.



Zelda is rendered immobile when mice scamper around her feet (not her biggest girl-power moments). With so many possibilities added to Link's usual dungeon-crawling options, the puzzles feel much fresher and become brain-bendingly difficult as the adventure wears on.

The game's three distinct play styles quickly form a repeating pattern: you complete a set of co-op floors in the Tower of Spirits, take the train to a new quadrant of the world map, and then solve puzzles and run errands for townsfolk to unlock the path to the next temple, in which Link goes solo through a traditional dungeon. You then return to the tower and repeat the cycle. I would prefer that the game weren't so predictable, but thankfully it spices things up with unexpected puzzles and side quests at stops along the way.

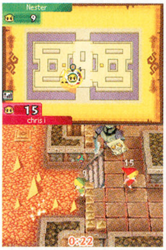
I'm a little less forgiving, however, of the mostly to-be-expected allotment of gear. Just the Sand Wand is wholly original; the two other "new" items—the Whirlwind and whip—mostly copy the functionality of past items in the series. For this longtime Zelda player, there's little excitement to be had in once again pulling a bow or boomerang out of a treasure chest. However, I give the developers a lot of credit for coming up with surprising new ways to put the old standbys to use. You can now, for example, throw a frozen boomerang over water to shape a custom path of ice. Weapons and items are ultimately just tools to use in puzzles, and many of the puzzles are pretty original. But with only seven primary gadgets, it would have been nice if more of them were totally new.

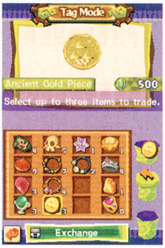


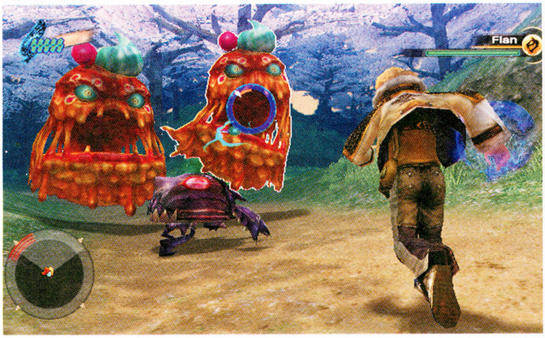
In the grand scheme of things, my quibbles are vastly outnumbered by the many moments of pure brilliance that are found in Spirit Tracks. Link and Zelda make a great team, the puzzles are especially clever and challenging this time around, the stylus controls work great and make many items more fun to use, and as goofy as it might sound, I found the setting of a land built around train tracks to be pretty charming. There are also several neat references to the cast and events of Phantom Hourglass for Zelda fans who care about continuity, and a couple of wireless features sweeten the deal (see the "But Wait, There's More" sidebar). If you like Zelda games, you were going to buy Spirit Tracks no matter what. But rest assured that you will not only be getting another fine Nintendo DS installment, but one of the series's best handheld titles to date. —**CHRIS SL.**

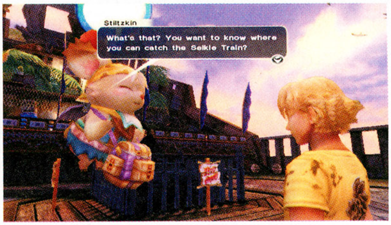
But Wait, There's More!

Although you don't buy a Zelda game looking for a frantic multiplayer experience, Spirit Tracks nonetheless includes a wireless Battle mode that up to four people can play with just one copy of the game. The goal is to collect the most gems while avoiding traps, Phantoms, and each other. It's a so-so time-waster that probably won't cut into your single-player adventuring, but it's still a nice bonus. You can also trade treasures wirelessly that can be turned in for custom train parts at a certain shop in the main game.

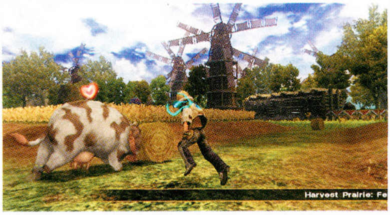



Select up to three items to trade.




Stiltzkin

What's that? You want to know where you can catch the Selkie Train?



Funky Fantasy

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: THE CRYSTAL BEARERS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

After a long and tumultuous development cycle (the project was first announced at E3 2005 and was completely rebooted at one point), Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers is finally a reality. So how is it? Strange. Very, very strange.

For the most part, that's not a bad thing. This is a daringly creative debut from director Toshiyuki Itahana, and though it stumbles at times, the overall experience is wholly original and, more importantly, a lot of fun. Eschewing the multiplayer focus of previous Crystal Chronicles titles, the game revolves around the solo exploits of freelance hero Layle, who commands the power of telekinesis. Manipulating his gift via the Wii Remote works like a charm, and its applications throughout the adventure are incredibly varied. Among them: surfing, playing soccer, catching fish, swiping someone's newspaper, taming wild oxen, pulling avalanche victims out of the snow, and, of course, battling monsters.

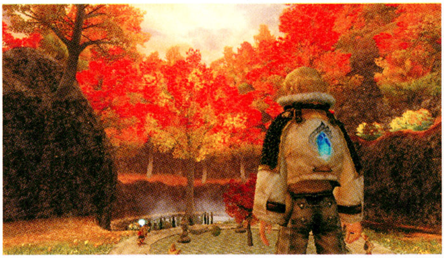
Layle doesn't carry any weapons with him, so telekinesis is his sole means of defense. The obvious approach is to pick up anything that isn't nailed down—be it a rock, a cannon ball, or a life preserver—and simply hurl it at the nearest enemy. But if you're clever, there are more-inventive ways to deal with most foes or pit them against each other. Pulling down an Iron Giant's visor before he fires his eye lasers will cause him to self-destruct, for instance, while replacing a skeleton's cranium with a dog bone will incite wolves to chase it. A lot of energy obviously went into the enemy designs, and many of them are pretty inspired.

The game affords abundant opportunity for experimentation outside of battle, as well, whether it's figuring out how to milk a cow or landscaping the perfect garden. What's sort of a shame is that so many of these cool discoveries are entirely optional, despite constituting the vast majority of the game's content, and your only rewards for uncovering them are medals that serve no practical purpose whatsoever. In fact, The Crystal Bearers may have the most lopsided ratio of optional-to-mandatory gameplay I've ever seen. It took me about 18 hours to beat the game while earning a little more than half of the 330 medals, but you could probably blast through the main quest in about 6 or 7 hours if you were so inclined. Optional or not, the ancillary stuff is still enjoyable; it just seems like the developers could have done a better job incorporating those ideas to create a more substantial core experience.

Despite its brevity, however, the main quest is fast-paced and packed with entertaining set pieces. You'll make a speedy getaway via chocobo, sneak past security on a train, and even partake in a little ballroom dancing. The story feels a bit underdeveloped, but it draws on the Crystal Chronicles mythology in some interesting ways and features an appealing cast of characters. Unconditional praise goes to the game's visuals, which are easily among the best on the console. Many of the environments are downright breathtaking, from the explosion of autumn color in Red Leaf Station to the emerald beaches of Costa Faguita. Topping off the presentation is an appropriately eclectic soundtrack. Some of the jazzier stuff can grate on you after a while, but the classical pieces are roundly excellent (particularly the opening theme).

You have to admire the courage of this development team. It took a lot of bold risks with the Final Fantasy name and delivered a weird, wonderful adventure unlike anything else out there. You'll get the most out of the game if you go into it with the same experimental spirit.

—STEVE T.



WRITERS' BLOCK

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE 251ST REASON TO LOVE NINTENDO?

Justin Cheng

"What're ya buyin'?" from Resident Evil 4 is a classic quote in my book. That line is still stuck in my head.

Chris Hoffman

I need to give a special shout out to composer Yuzo Koshiro's work on the Super NES. The soundtracks to Act Raiser and Super Adventure Island are amazing.

Chris Shepperd

If it wasn't for Nintendo's Golf, I never would've gotten an NES for Christmas. My dad wanted something he could play, too.

Chris Slate

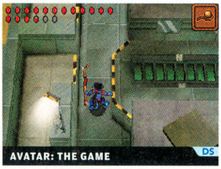
I love the fact that Nintendo is always full of surprises. With new kinds of games and advancements like motion control, they sure keep things interesting!

David F. Smith

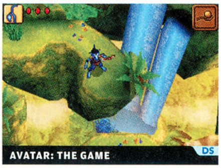
Nintendo gave me a chance to play Blazing Lazers again (on Virtual Console), which is also a chance to tell terrible jokes about what GUNHED stands for.

Steve Thomason

Takashi Tezuka. He may not be a household name, but Miyamoto's right-hand man has been an important creative force behind many of Nintendo's classics (including the original Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda).



AVATAR: THE GAME



AVATAR: THE GAME

AVATAR: THE GAME

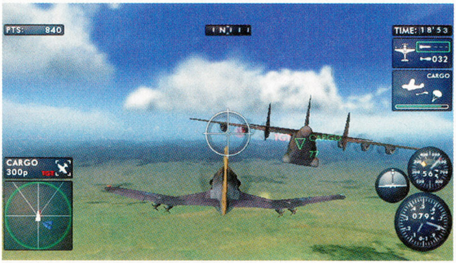
RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

The DS flavor of Avatar: The Game boldly re-imagines James Cameron's sci-fi epic as...a maze full of switches. Players control Nok, a young Na'vi warrior, as he battles that unceasing horde of switches to understand and disrupt the plans of the Sky People (humans, in their recurring role as selfish dirtbags).

When they're not switching, players use the stylus to cleave a redundant roster of enemies and flora. Poking things yields Essence Seeds, which you combine with Lore (scraps of info you'll find while slogging) at Lore Shrines to purchase superficial upgrades. Other scraps of info (those detailing the plans of the Sky People) can be shared with Eywa (the communal spirit/whatever of the Na'vi) by completing puzzles meant for your two-year-old nephew. Sharing intel with Eywa derives tools that foster the illusion of varied gameplay. (You know what tools are good for? Throwing switches.)

The movie trappings are, naturally, merely an excuse to dump players into a mindless platformer that refuses to reward continued play; the character-improvement system won't satisfy upgrade junkies, the levels inspire little more than glassy-eyed stupor, and combat is a shallow bore. I suggest you spend your Essence Seeds elsewhere. **—PATRICK C.**



Take to the Skies

THE SKY CRAWLERS: INNOCENT ACES

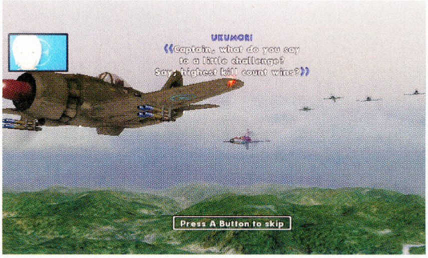
RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **PROJECT ACES**
ESRB: **TEEN**

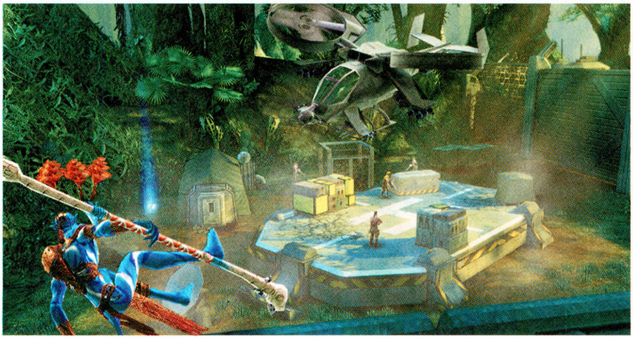
The best thing about The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces is that it makes you feel like a badass ace pilot. This is in part due to the game's accessible arcade-style gameplay—whether you're using the motion-controlled Wii Remote-and-Nunchuk combo or the Classic/GameCube controller (my personal preference), taking out bogeys is a snap.

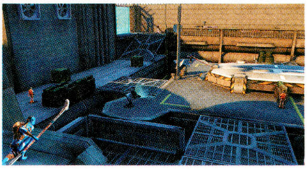
But more than that, it's due to the game's Tactical Maneuver Command (TMC) system. Getting close to your target fills up the TMC meter; activate the TMC, and your plane performs impressive maneuvers that put you right behind your target. Sure, it removes you from the action a bit, as the game briefly takes over the flying duties (in the form of an in-game cut-scene) once the TMC is triggered. And sure, it makes the combat easier since your target usually ends up right in your crosshairs. But the TMC gives the dogfighting in The Sky Crawlers a more cinematic feel (albeit the graphics could be better on the whole)—and it really does make you feel unstoppable when you quickly gain the upper hand on an enemy.

Speaking of its cinematic quality, The Sky Crawlers is chock-full of anime cut-scenes that were animated by Production I.G, the same studio that made *The Sky Crawlers* anime film. Although these cut-scenes aren't all fantastic (in fact, they can sometimes make the story a tad more obtuse, especially since you can't really familiarize yourself with all of the characters thrown your way), they are ultimately welcome additions to the solid gameplay. **—JUSTIN C.**



UKUMORI
《Captain, what do you say to a little challenge? Say, highest kill count wins?》





The Mild Blue Yonder

AVATAR: THE GAME

RATING: 5.0

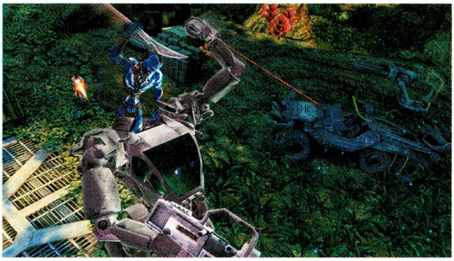
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL**
ESRB: **TEEN**

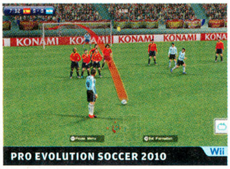
Despite claims to the contrary, Avatar: The Game is exactly what you would expect from a licensed title. In other words, it's entirely mediocre. That's a real shame considering that the world of Pandora and its cerulean inhabitants, the Na'vi, are intriguing. The game is a prequel to the film, and has you assuming the role of a Na'vi warrior named Ryuk who seeks revenge against the invading humans. See, the humans are in search of a precious material called Unobtanium, and they're willing to destroy everything it their path—including Ryuk's village—to get it.

This narrative is told in a combination of cut-scenes and text (more of the latter than the former), though jumping from one scene to the next isn't always a smooth transition. Characters are introduced with little context, and motivations aren't always clear. You're given goals at the beginning of each level, but you primarily just follow a linear path, slaying all the soldiers you encounter along the way. Although you can rush at them and swipe at your opponents with your staff (by swinging the Wii Remote), you're better off going about it more stealthily. If you have the higher ground or are hidden by tall grass, you can sneak up on enemies and press B to initiate a stealthy attack. You have to follow this up with a quick-time event, copying the Wii Remote gesture you see onscreen. Sadly, the game doesn't always recognize your gestures correctly, and your target will spot you after a failed attempt. But your foes aren't the brightest bunch, so you can hide and try to take them out quietly again. You also have a bow to hit long-range targets, though enemies will see you once you nock an arrow (you have to stand up to use the bow, after all). It's all pretty easy to play but becomes very repetitive quickly.

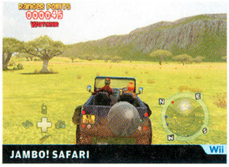
The developers added a touch of variety by having you control creatures called Hellfire Wasps; the camera shifts to following the insects, allowing you to scout ahead while Ryuk remains safely hidden. You can control the wasps most precisely using the Wii MotionPlus accessory, but this is the only purpose for which the peripheral is used. (I found it easier to forgo the wasps altogether and rely on my warrior's skills.) In addition, there are some flying-centric levels that also help break up the gameplay. Riding a creature called a Banshee, you fly in on-rails segments (à la Star Fox) and shoot airborne enemies with your bow. Using the Wii Balance Board to control the Banshee can spice up these segments further, but it's much easier to use the Nunchuk instead. Even these parts get old, though, particularly since the main enemies of these flying levels, helicopter-type gunships, are dispatched the exact same way and have the exact same animations in quick-time events involving them.

The main issue with Avatar: The Game is its repetitive nature—there's not enough variety in this fairly short adventure (the game can be completed easily in a day), and it offers very little replay value. The title is worth playing once because of the compelling world in which it's set, and being able to kick human butt cooperatively with a friend is a welcome touch, but Avatar ultimately feels like yet another middling licensed game. **—JUSTIN C.**

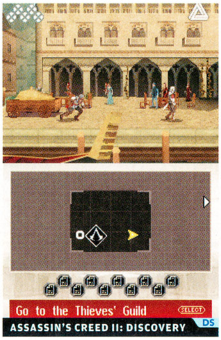




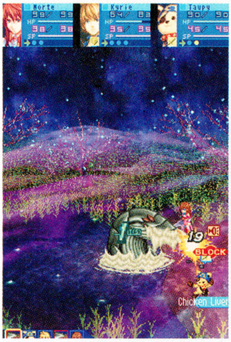
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010

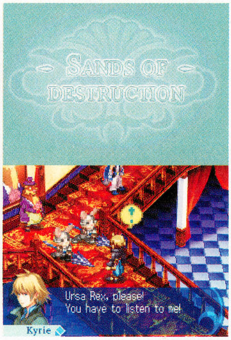


JAMBO! SAFARI



ASSASSIN'S CREED II: DISCOVERY





PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010

RATING: **8.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **WINNING ELEVEN PRODUCTIONS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Given the youthful glow of PES 2009, the 2010 offering predictably offers little broken ground. The small improvements that have been made, however, are welcome additions; the Play Energy system punishes players too reliant on sprinting and tackling, and My Team mode offers robust Mii-based team-building. (There is also a standard assortment of lesser tweaks.) But the ultimate worth of PES remains in its bold control scheme, whereby players direct multiple footballers simultaneously to conduct grand symphonies of open space (or, alternatively, to flail ineptly and curse their teammates' lead cleats). Debate over that scheme has been rendered largely moot by EA's oversimplified FIFA 2010; if you're interested in a proper soccer sim for Wii, PES 2010 is the only game in town. **—PATRICK C.**

JAMBO! SAFARI

RATING: **3.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **FULL FAT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The biggest problem with Jambo! Safari is that its main gameplay hook—catching animals by twirling and flicking the Wii Remote—gets old after about the fifth time you do it. Sure, there are non-animal-rescuing missions, too, but they mostly boil down to following an arrow or driving to a red dot within a time limit; even the animal-care minigames (which include thrilling activities such as pumping water) don't bring the fun. On top of that, the game has atrocious load times, which makes no sense given how ugly some of the graphics are. Jambo! Safari might have some merit as an educational tool (the animal facts you unlock are interesting), but as a game, not so much. **—CHRIS H.**

ASSASSIN'S CREED II: DISCOVERY

RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **GRIPTONITE GAMES**
ERSB: **TEEN**

Assassin's Creed II: Discovery does an admirable job of tying together platforming, combat, and stealth without having any of those game styles feel like a particular weakness. That's not to say any of the elements are perfect—the swordplay is gruesome fun, but it gets a little stale, the stealth missions are exhilarating but too frequent, and the platforming can be hit-and-miss, especially when swinging across bars. The plot is compelling, even if it does tend to get lost in brief but inevitable subplots that are required to stretch out the gameplay to a reasonable length. The major ding on the story is its odd glorification of the assassins, as if this secret cabal of murderers-for-hire were the noble, enlightened contingent of the Renaissance. Doubtful. **—CHRIS SH.**

Just Another Apocalypse

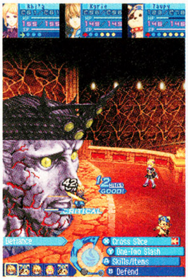
SANDS OF DESTRUCTION

RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **IMAGEEPOCH**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Sands of Destruction could have been a number of other games. It might as well be, say, Star Ocean 5, or Wild ARMs... whatever the next one would be. It's a colorful, splashy fantasy role-playing game—no less, but also no more.

If you've been through a Japanese RPG or three, the characters and their story should seem pretty familiar. There's a fresh-faced young hero; a hot-looking female mentor; some half-human, half-animal comic-relief figures; a girl in a ridiculous frilly Lolita outfit; and they're all embroiled in the battle against a domineering evil empire (but you probably already guessed that part). The graphics are well-crafted on a technical level—especially the sharp-looking sprites in the battle mode—but it's hard to shake the feeling that you've seen them before.



That battle system helps save the game, though. Besides looking great, it's fast and intuitive. One simple menu built around the four face buttons handles items, spells, and regular attacks, so it's easy to use a wide range of tactics without any more effort than tapping X instead of Y. The pace doesn't slow down between battles, either—dungeon design is becoming a lost art, but Sands of Destruction has some very clever areas to wander through. The layouts and puzzles are just complicated enough to present an involving challenge.

Sega played it safe with this one, and in the end it's hard to blame them. Coming out of left field like, say, Shin Megami Tensei is a pretty substantial gamble for a big-budget production. Sands of Destruction may be a little iffy on the "role-playing," but it gets the "game" part just right. **—DAVID S.**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

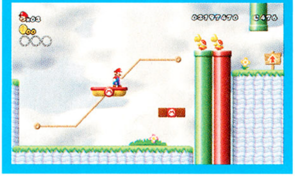
Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
The Bigs 2	6.0	2K Sports	244	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	5.5	Electronic Arts	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Little King's Story	9.0	XSEED	244	T
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Overlord: Dark Legend	7.0	Codemasters	244	T
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T
Virtua Tennis 2009	7.0	Sega	244	E
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T

MORE ON:

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. Wii

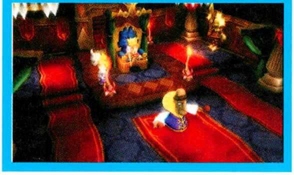
While NSMB Wii has largely earned gushing reviews, I've seen a few folks dock points for not being innovative enough or having online play. Huh? Since when is top-notch 2-D Mario action not enough? I'd understand if we got Mario sidescrollers all the time, but this is just the second one in 18 years! —CHRIS SL.



MORE ON:

LITTLE KING'S STORY

Since it's time to vote on the Nintendo Power Awards, I thought I'd make one final, impassioned plea for everyone to check out Little King's Story. Is it as great as New Super Mario Bros. Wii? Maybe not. But it's a wildly addictive strategy game in the mold of Pikmin, with a great sense of humor, a fantastic classical score, and more charm than you can shake a scepter at. Take up this throne and I promise you won't be disappointed. —STEVE T.



Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Big Bang Mini	8.5	SouthPeak	237	E

MORE ON:

BAND HERO

Take Guitar Hero 5 and substitute the rock-'n'-roll with pop music, and you get Band Hero for Wii. I don't have a problem with that in and of itself—and I actually prefer many of Band Hero's tracks—but do we really need yet another band game? —**JUSTIN C.**

Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	**5.0**	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	**4.0**	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon Plus	**8.0**	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	**7.0**	Ignition	239	E
Bookworm DS	**8.5**	PopCap	249	E
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	**5.0**	Atari	238	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	**6.0**	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	**4.0**	Ubisoft	249	T
C.O.R.E.	**5.5**	Graffiti	242	M
The Dark Spire	**5.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Dawn of Discovery	**8.5**	Ubisoft	244	E
Dokapon Journey	**4.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	**8.0**	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	**8.5**	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	**8.0**	THQ	248	E
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	**7.0**	Konami	237	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	**4.0**	Aspyr	248	T
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	**6.5**	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	**8.5**	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	**6.0**	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Fossil Fighters	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E
Gardening Mama	**8.0**	Majesco	240	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	**9.0**	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	**7.0**	Activision	237	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits	**7.0**	Activision	244	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	**8.0**	Natsume	243	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	**7.0**	Natsume	248	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	**8.0**	Electronic Arts	240	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	**7.0**	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	**4.0**	505	246	E10+
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	**6.0**	Aksys	242	T
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	**9.0**	**Square Enix**	**247**	**E10+**
Knights in the Nightmare	**8.0**	Atlus	243	T
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	**7.5**	Atlus	238	T
The Legendary Starfy	**7.0**	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Battles	**5.0**	Warner Bros.	243	E
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	**5.0**	LucasArts	249	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Lux-Pain	**4.0**	Ignition	240	T
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	**7.5**	Konami	242	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	**9.5**	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	**8.0**	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/Black Ace	**6.0**	Capcom	244	E
Miami Law	**3.0**	Hudson	243	T
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	**8.5**	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	**6.0**	Eidos	247	E10+
My World, My Way	**7.0**	Atlus	239	E
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	**5.0**	Tomy	243	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	**7.0**	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	**7.0**	Ignition	248	E10+
Overlord Minions	**7.0**	Codemasters	244	E10+
Peggle Dual Shot	**8.5**	PopCap	240	E
Phantasy Star Ø	**8.0**	Sega	248	E10+
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	**8.0**	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	**9.0**	Nintendo	241	E
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	**7.0**	Ubisoft	237	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	**8.0**	Nintendo	246	E10+
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	**8.0**	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Quantum of Solace	**6.0**	Activision	237	T
Rabbids Go Home	**7.0**	Ubisoft	249	E
Retro Game Challenge	**8.0**	XSEED	237	E
Rhythm Heaven	**9.0**	Nintendo	241	E
Roogoo Attack	**4.0**	SouthPeak	243	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	**7.0**	Natsume	237	E
Scribblenauts	**9.0**	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	**8.0**	Atlus	244	T
Skate It	**5.5**	Electronic Arts	237	E
Space Bust-A-Move	**7.0**	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	**8.0**	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	**5.0**	Electronic Arts	247	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	**5.5**	LucasArts	249	E10+
Steal Princess	**6.0**	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	**7.0**	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	**7.0**	Atlus	241	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	**4.5**	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tokyo Beat Down	**6.0**	Atlus	240	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	**4.0**	Activision	237	E
Touch Mechanic	**5.0**	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	**7.0**	Atlus	240	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	**7.0**	Activision	245	E10+
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	**9.0**	Square Enix	240	T
WireWay	**6.5**	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	**4.0**	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	**6.5**	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	**7.0**	THQ	248	T
Zubo	**6.5**	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

MORE ON:

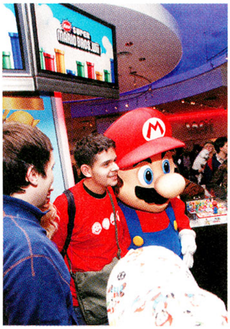
KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 DAYS

Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days packs a lot of content into a little DS cartridge. Not only does it boast some absolutely stellar production values—it's probably the best-looking 3-D game on DS and it sounds incredible—but it's got a great character-driven story, as well. The mission-based format works perfectly for a handheld title, and the action is true to the series. I do wish the Disney aspects played a bigger role, though. —**CHRIS H.**

You're more outgoing now, you know that?

COMMUNITY

New Super Mario Bros. Wii



EVENT

Let's-a Go!

Nintendo celebrates Mario at the New Super Mario Bros. Wii launch event in NYC.

Though New Super Mario Bros. Wii was released on November 15, New Yorkers who braved the rain and crowds were able to get their hands on the game a day early at the Nintendo World store's launch event. Nintendo gave the store an NSMB facelift, and hundreds of fans checked out the game, had their picture taken with Mario, and reminisced about Mario games past.

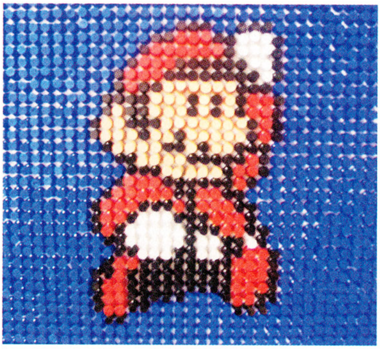
To celebrate the latest installment in the Mario series, Nintendo brought out kiosks for people to play classic Mario games and erected tents in front of the store for a mini Mario museum featuring exhibits of Mario games and merchandise throughout the years. Nintendo employees dressed as Mario posed for pictures, and there was a photo area where fans could get themselves inserted into a digital photograph of the NSMB Wii background. Of course, the game was the main attraction, and with dozens of gameplay kiosks and plenty of game copies available for early purchase, Nintendo definitely showed the title the love it deserves. —TOM H.

[Above] One of the best things we saw at the event was this Nintendo Power lunchbox.

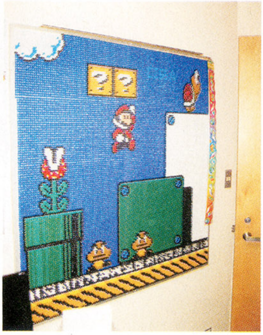
FANDOM

Mario Pinpointed

Students pin down their appreciation for the NES.



A little boredom and a lot of free time can lead to greatness. That formula spurred a handful of computer-science students at the University of Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Canada to raid the campus for multicolored pushpins and converge on the student computing center's bulletin board. There they amused themselves by creating Mario-themed sprites, but the project soon took on a life of its own. Around 17,000 pushpins and many sore thumbs later, this fantastic Super Mario Bros. 3 mural was born.



Much of the labor and the drive to create the mural primarily came from a group of five or six students, though dozens more helped out over the course of the year it took to complete. Acquiring enough of the proper-colored pins to make the mural authentic was a daunting effort in itself. Starting out with around $120 in donations from various students, the group continually bought out the pushpin stock in local office-supply stores. It turns out getting more than a few hundred of a particular-color pushpin at one time isn't easy. When all was said and done, the students had shelled out over $500 for pushpins. Now *that's* dedication. –**NATHAN M.**

ODD JOB

Oddest idea of the month!

A Little Retro Swing

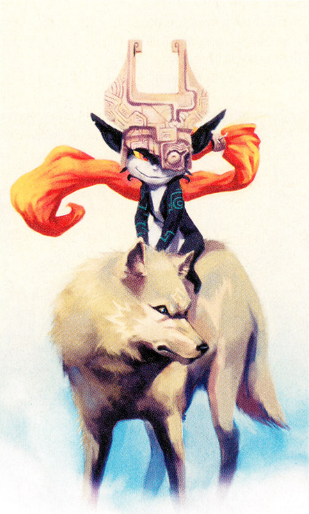
This jazz combo brings favorite NES tunes to life.

Jazz pianist Scott Bradlee and sax player Ben Golder-Novick have come up with a crazy new way to dust off and enjoy old-school NES titles. The duo (calling themselves Eight Bits of Jam) provide the live musical accompaniment to beloved Nintendo classics in real-time while people play through the games. The musicians' jazzed-up take on 8-bit jams from Super Mario Bros., Double Dragon, The Legend of Zelda, Mega Man, Final Fantasy, and other NES hits is superstylish and spot-on.

The longtime buds have been jamming for years. "We've always had kind of a running competition to see who could throw in the most random musical quotations of '80s pop songs, Nintendo games, and Dr. Dre samples," Bradlee explains. "We developed a pretty large repertoire of Nintendo music." The spark of inspiration for the project came at a party when Bradlee was messing around on a keyboard while some friends were playing Super Mario Bros. The idea just stuck. –**NATHAN M.**

FANDOM

Twilight Tandem



We received this sharp image of Wolf Link and Midna from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess from Ian McDonald, a 21-year-old animation student from Toronto, Ontario. Ian created the image using Photoshop and a drawing tablet over the course of about eight hours, starting with an enlarged thumbnail image before sketching in the numerous colors and details. Asked which of the Zelda games he loves the most, Ian says he had the most fun with The Wind Waker on GameCube, but admits, "I love Ocarina of Time like it's my girlfriend." –**ANDREW H.**

FANDOM

Scribbleplush

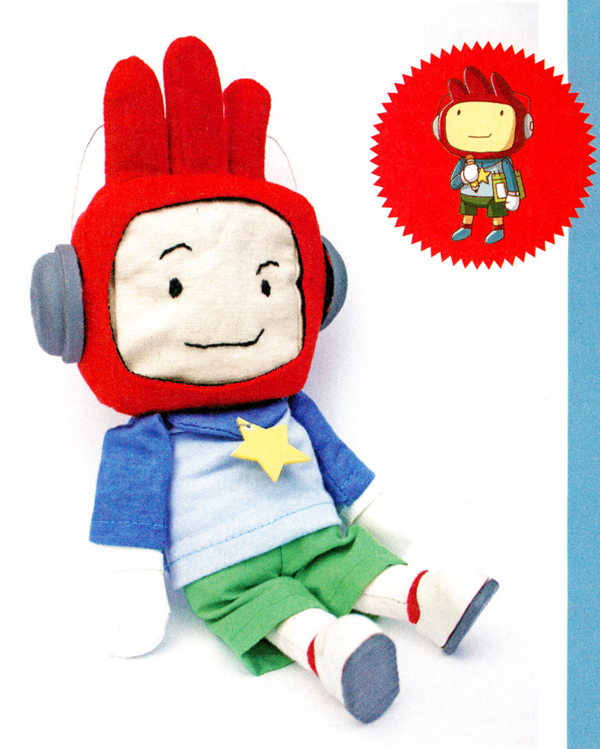
One of the most creative Nintendo DS games ever inspires creative DIY crafting.

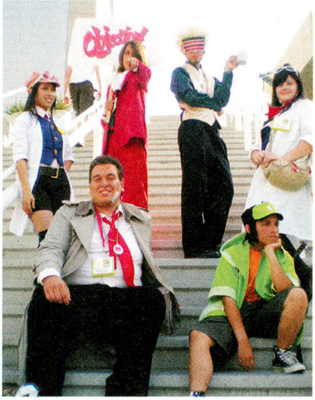
Scribblenauts has prompted many players to come up with interesting ways of solving puzzles, but the Nintendo DS game fostered a much different reaction in Rosemary Travale: she decided to make a plush of the game's protagonist, Maxwell.

The 25-year-old freelance illustrator from Hamilton, Ontario, Canada had created other crafts in the past, including a handful of simple plush dolls, but says Maxwell was easily the most complex plush she'd ever attempted. Travale started the project before the game came out, and initially studied drawings and images of Maxwell to "understand how the character would translate into an actual doll," she explains.

Plush Maxwell's genesis began with a soft cube shape for the head, which was then fitted with the character's already-iconic rooster hat. From there, Travale sized up the rest of Maxwell's body and created it using a combination of hand and machine sewing, plus a bit of hot glue. Travale says the trickiest part of the whole process was the shoes, which she initially intended to make out of vinyl (like Maxwell's gloves), but eventually opted to make out of modeling clay after a few failed attempts. "It ended up working out for the better," she says, "since it added a bit of weight to the feet of the doll."

According to Travale, she completed the doll after about three days of off-and-on work, and used maybe $30 worth of materials, though most were left over from previous crafting projects. And though she finished the plush before the game shipped, she's really enjoying Scribblenauts, and it seems fitting that her favorite terms in the game are as unique and inventive as her great plush tribute to Maxwell: "I think my most used items are 'lasso' and 'moonshoes,'" she admits. **—ANDREW H.**





COSPLAY

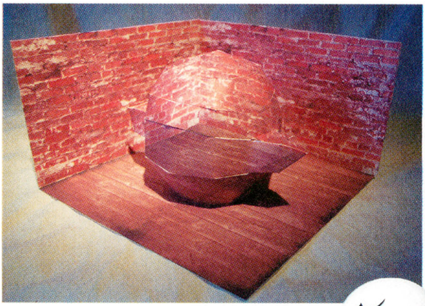
Ace Cosplay

There's no objecting to these colorful costumes.

For some gamers, the mere exclamation "Objection!" triggers fond thoughts of the courtroom interrogations and wacky conversations in Capcom's Ace Attorney games for Nintendo DS. One such fan is Zack Gnatek, a 17-year-old student from California who corralled a few friends to dress up as characters from the series at July's San Diego Comic-Con.

Gnatek, who dressed as masked attorney and coffee aficionado Godot, assembled his costume by modifying some dress clothes he owned, then adding a white wig and a homemade mask. He started out as a solo act, but when he encountered the other Ace Attorney cosplayers—Chelsea Oberlander as Ema Skye, Ismael Newman as Dick Gumshoe, Harrison Benker as Miles Edgeworth, and Dany Cordero as Cody Hackins—at a previous convention, they recognized the potential of appearing as a group.

Accolades from fellow Comic-Con attendees are one thing, but these cosplayers received one additional honor on the show floor: series producer Motohide Eshiro was in attendance, and was apparently impressed by their work. "Mr. Eshiro took a picture of us on his cell phone," recalls Gnatek. "We felt like celebrities." **—ANDREW H.**



FANDOM

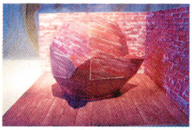
Visible Invisibility

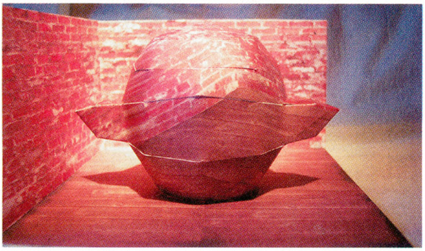
Can you spot the invisible Boo papercraft?

How do you go about crafting a physical representation of something that is both invisible and intangible? Just ask Philipp Stollenmayer, 18, of Germany, who used simple paper, a computer, printer ink, and a little glue to create this magnificent papercraft sculpture of an invisible Boo from Super Mario 64. More precisely, it's perhaps the distinct lack of Boo in this image that's so impressive.

After a few frustrating attempts at hand-drawing and assembling his first Nintendo-related papercraft, a Wii, Stollenmayer found working with 3-D-modeling software to be a far better way to design projects. "I liked the cute Nintendo characters, so I began to build the ones I like the most," he says. "It started with Mario Kart and KK Slider." Having his work published on www.nintendopapercraft.com spurred his desire to keep at it. Since all the popular Nintendo characters have already been done to death, he's constantly on the lookout for fresh characters to craft.

Stollenmayer was up for a challenge and began searching for a papercraft subject he could make invisible. With prospects being slim, Boo seemed a natural fit. He first tested things out in a 3-D-modeling program on his computer. Forming the three walls and adding a haunted-mansion-like texture, he then made a picture of the walls and applied it to Boo. The rest was a matter of printing, folding, and gluing. The whole thing took about two days to complete and went more smoothly than expected, he says. "I was surprised that I didn't have many problems with the Invisible Boo papercraft. The illusion worked after the first test building," Stollenmayer reflects. "It was some kind of luck that I got the perspective right after the first try." —**NATHAN M.**



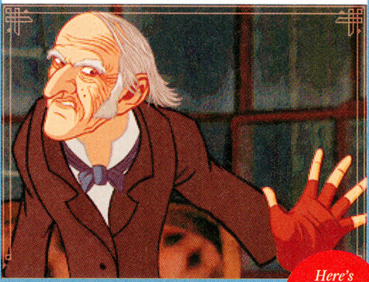


WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

SEND CAPTION TO screentest@nintendopower.com.

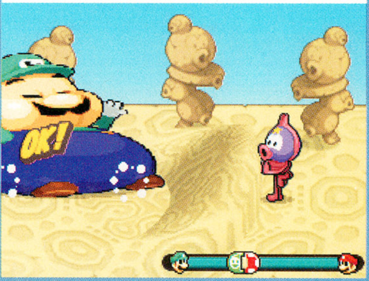
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



Instead of "humbug," Scrooge tells people to "talk to the hand" in the modern update of the classic tale.

Here's our caption. **THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?**

VOLUME 248'S SHOT



"Tired of living in his brother's chubby shadow, Luigi finally decided to turn the tables." —**WOLF**

"Oh no! What have I done!? I knew combining the DNA of Luigi and Snorlax was a bad idea!" —**JACE V.**

"Luigi's visit to calamari land ended poorly for everyone involved." —**THELEGENDOFSAMUS**

"No, Luigi, it's not OK! Now I need to get some air freshers before you kill everyone here!" —**PRINCESS_OF_HYRULE64**

"Luigi had to learn the hard way about what happens when you put off playing Wii Fit." —**ZRM**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

NEXT MONTH

This issue was about celebrating the past. Next issue is all about the future: it's our annual preview extravaganza, highlighting the most exciting new games of 2010. We'll look at Super Mario Galaxy 2, Metroid: Other M, Sin and Punishment 2, Pokémon HeartGold and Pokémon SoulSilver Versions, Epic Mickey, Ghost Trick, Monster Hunter Tri, and more, including a couple surprises!

FEBRUARY 2010 • VOL. 251

PREVIEW

2010

NINTENDO POWER (ISSN 1041-9551) is published 13 times a year, monthly plus Holiday issue following December issue. Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Phone: (650) 872-1642. Fax (650) 872-2207. Website: www.futureus.com. Periodicals postage paid in South San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by Time Warner Retail. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues: U.S.:$24.95. Canada: $29.95. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #R128220688). Subscriptions do not include newsstand only specials. **POSTMASTER**: Send changes of address to: Nintendo Power, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Standard Mail Enclosure in the following edition: None. Ride-Along Enclosure: None. Canada Post PMA #40612608. Returns: Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada. Future US, Inc. also publishes Guitar World, Mac|Life, Maximum PC, PC Gamer, PlayStation: The Official Magazine, Pregnancy, Revolver, Windows: The Official Magazine, The Official Xbox Magazine and others.

Entire contents copyright 2009 Future US, Inc. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Reproduction on the Internet of the articles and pictures in this magazine is illegal without the prior written consent of Nintendo Power. Products named in the pages of Nintendo Power are trademarks of their respective companies. Future US, Inc. is not affiliated with the companies or products advertised or covered in Nintendo Power.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: Nintendo Power Customer Care, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Phone: 1-866-941-8368. Web: www.nintendopower.com/customerservice. Email: nintendopower@cdsfulfillment.com. Back issues can be purchased by calling 1-800-865-7240. REPRINTS: Reprint Management Service. Phone: 717-399-1900 ext. 100.

YOU FOUND THE OCARINA!

SWEET POTATO OCARINA $39.95
5 holes (1 thumbhole, octave +1), includes Songbook/Tutorial/Serenades, Lullabies, Minuets

EXTENDED RANGE SWEET POTATO $49.95
6 holes (2 thumbholes, octave + 4), includes Extended Range Songbook plus Songbook I/Tutorial/Serenades, Lullabies, Minuets

DRAGONTOOTH OCARINA $99.95
12 Hole Ocarina with metallic lustre glaze. Comes with display stand, Songbook Tutorial, metal chain, Origin Myth with original songs

DRAGONTOOTH

SPEARHEAD OCARINA $19.95
6 Holes with 2 thumbholes (octave +3)
Comes as a beaded necklace
and Songbook/Tutorial

Plenty of other ocarina styles, songbooks, holsters, carrying cases, video tutorials and demos at
www.songbirdocarina.com

SHIPPING INFO
Shipping & Handling $6 - $8 (1 - 2 weeks for delivery)
PRIORITY Shipping $12 -$14 (2-5 biz days for delivery)
We also ship FedEx for super fast delivery

Order via our Website
or call Toll Free:
1-866-899-4046

Sweet Potato Ocarina

Songbird Ocarinas
2751 East 11th St. Los Angeles, CA 90023
www.songbirdocarina.com

- **Easy To Play**
- **Ceramic Flute**
- **Songbook/Tutorial Included**
- **Minuets, Serenades, Requiems**
- **Handmade in U.S.A.**

Songbird Ocarinas is not affiliated with or endorsed by Nintendo of America, Inc.

"One of the most exciting **Final Fantasy** games in ages."
- Nintendo Power

FINAL FANTASY
CRYSTAL CHRONICLES
THE CRYSTAL BEARERS

King Behemoth

Unleash Layle's Crystal Bearer powers over gravity!

Immerse yourself in a variety of motion-driven gameplay!

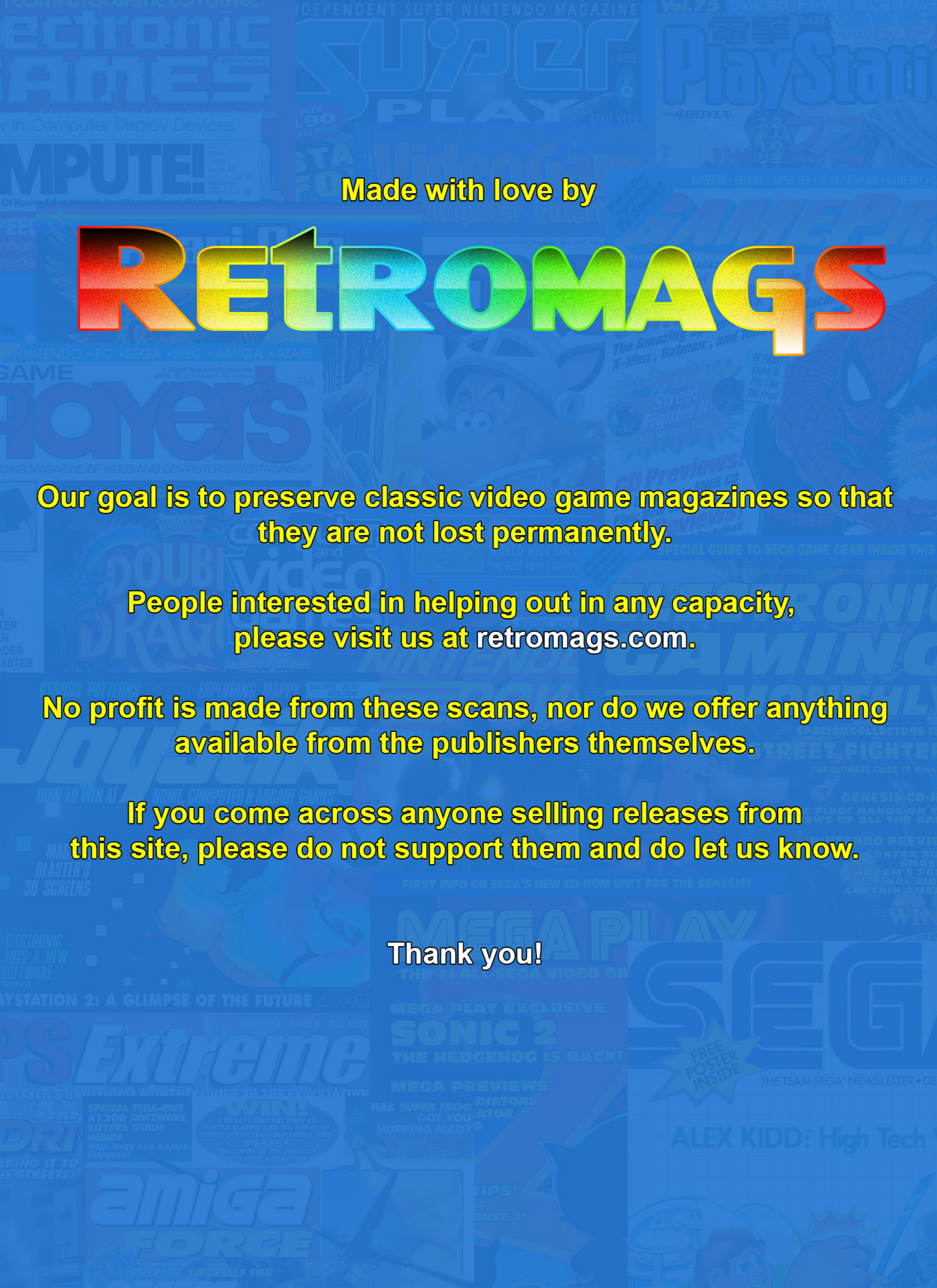
Discover the secrets of a fully interactive world!

TEEN
T
Alcohol Reference
Crude Humor
Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Available Now
www.thecrystalbearers.com

Wii
SQUARE ENIX

© 2009 SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. All Rights Reserved. CHARACTER DESIGN: Toshiyuki Itahana
FINAL FANTASY, SQUARE ENIX and the SQUARE ENIX logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Square Enix Holdings Co., Ltd. CRYSTAL CHRONICLES, THE CRYSTAL BEARERS, and the FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: THE CRYSTAL BEARERS logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Square Enix Co., Ltd. Wii and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo.
The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.



Made with love by

RETROMAGS

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity,
please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from
this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!